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ROCHE-BLANCHE;

OR, THE

HUNTERS OF THE PYRENEES.

A Romance.

By MISS ANNA MARIA PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE VILLAGE OF MARIENDORPT," &c.

O 'tis a gallant vessel! but the wind
Strives fiercely in her sails: each sleety blast
Rifles her shrouds; while the froth'd brine o'ertops
Her topmast's head. -- Hark to that pealing gust!
It roll'd along the mountainous waves, as 'twere
Thunder 'mong Alps; or the dread voice of doom. --
Brother spirit! think you this bark will 'scape,
Or all her freight of goodly virtues, be
Wreck'd by yon treach'rous rock? Woe's me, there's one
Upon the lofty shore, straining each sense;
With cries and clasped hands asking to save,
Who if voice answer'd him, or instinct taught
Which wave might bear him right, would instant plunge
Into the yawning gulph; so to attain
And share, like fate with this lone bark! *MS. Poem.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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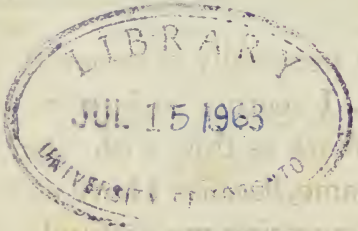

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LONDON.
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TO

HIS EXCELLENCY

DOCTOR LEIGHTON,

ACTUAL STATE COUNSELLOR OF
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF
ALL THE RUSSIAS,

PHYSICIAN TO THE IMPERIAL COURT,

MEMBER OF
THE INTERIOR MEDICAL ADMINISTRATION AND
NATIONAL CIVILIZATION,

KNIGHT OF THE ORDERS ST. WLADIMIR AND
ST. ANN OF THE SECOND CLASS,

&c. &c. &c.

THOUGH personally unknown to you, dear Sir, I venture to inscribe even such a Work as this, with your respected name, because I have no other way of expressing my gratitude, or of publicly acknowledging, that to your skill and benevolence, under God, I

am indebted for the life of a distant and most dear brother.

The details of his long and alarming illness have only just reached Sir Robert Porter's family: I must not enlarge upon the feelings with which they have read those details: indeed it would be impossible to express adequately, their grateful and venerating sentiments for that kind friend and physician, who though suddenly bereaved himself, while watching the object of another's anxiety, allowed himself no interval for mourning his own loss. — I will, however, believe that such a heart has already had its recompence in Russia; and that it will again be susceptible of the same generous pleasure, when thus assured of the happiness it has caused in England.

That consolation and comfort of a higher character, from the only Power that can amply bestow both, may be dispensed to you, with many other blessings, is, dear Sir, the sincerest wish

Of your grateful humble Servant,

ANNA MARIA PORTER.

LONG-DITTON,
June, 1822.

ADDRESS

TO THE READER.

If the Reader of the following Work happen to have read its predecessor, "The Village of Mariendorpt," it may be necessary to apprize him that the resemblance he may possibly detect between some features of the two stories, is not accidental. It once struck me, that it might be curious and entertaining, to mark the different effect produceable by placing dissimilar characters in similar situations: whether the execution of such an idea has marred or mended the present production, it is not for me to determine. Every person that has ever attempted a work of fiction, knows by experience,

that in the writing of books, as in the conduct of life,

> "There is a Providence that shapes our course,
> Rough hew it as we may!"

Let us do what we will, the stubborn materials often take a direction completely opposite to what we had intended; incidents necessarily following the bent of the characters from which they are supposed to originate: and these latter, as frequently, develope contrary to our original conceptions.

If the alleged resemblance between my two stories is found imperfect, this observation may be allowed to explain that imperfection. I must at the same time urge the same remark, as an apology to a very liberal and enlightened critic, for apparent obstinacy in a fault he condemns.* I will not plead in

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* The writer of an article in the New Monthly Magazine of last year, upon the Village of Mariendorpt.

extenuation of such offence, the sanction of the greatest master of our day, — for he has conquered "the debateable land" — but confess, that although I laid down that acute, yet kindly review, with a sincere determination to make my next work purely imaginary, I found it impossible to rekindle imagination, until I should have warmed my heart by contemplating either past or present excellence. I betook me, therefore, to the huge picture gallery of history: there, two or three portraits interested me, as the faces of living beings have sometimes done; and, furnished with these, I was soon able to imagine others; and so arrange the whole, in the group now presented before my Reader.

I trust every candid mind will believe, that I did not willingly prefer a foreign history of the 16th century, to that of our own country at the same period. Who does not know that in the scenes of "Kenilworth" some of our mightiest dead have re-appeared in actual exist-

ence? It must be a bolder spirit than I dare boast, that calls them again from "the vasty deep:" in these humbler pages, they are required only to pass like the race of Banquo — as shadows!

I am not aware of having to apologize for any material alteration in historical facts and dates: having allowed myself but the latitude of a month or two, in the conspiracies of Amboise, and of the De la Poles. In the pedigree of the last illustrious family, prefixed to the Memoirs of the Cardinal, not one of the brothers are shown to have left male posterity: Hume, however, and Camden, make Arthur de la Pole the nephew of the Cardinal: I felt privileged, therefore, to avail myself of their mistake, and have introduced this nephew into my story; only giving him a different christian name, to prevent confusion of persons.

P. S. — Since writing the above, a friend has shown me an article in a weekly Review, wherein a sentence or

two is quoted from the introduction to a work by the author of Waverley. It is so fully illustrative of an observation hazarded at the beginning of this Address, that I ought, perhaps, to efface the latter: but I confess my inability to conceal the gratification occasioned me, by discovering any coincidence of thought, between myself and such a writer.

Long-Ditton, June 12th, 1822.

The Reader is requested to substitute the name of ROCHE-BLANCHE, *for* ROCHE BLANC, *throughout this work.*

ROCHE BLANC;

OR,

THE HUNTERS OF THE PYRENEES.

CHAPTER I.

In one of those beautiful vallies which are to be found at the entrance of the Pyrenees, where the lovelier features of sylvan landscape invite the eye and the spirit to rest, ere they scale the stupendous steeps themselves; a few scattered cottages, with each its orchard, surrounding a chateau, bore the name of a village, and gave the title of Baron de Roche Blanc to its proprietor.

Eustache de la Marot de Roche Blanc was long past the meridian of life, but he

preserved the air of one who either was handsome, or had fancied himself so; and recalling with complacency, that his imposing manner, aided by a tolerable figure, and great curiosity in the science of dress, had made him irresistible to some women, he still threw such a dash of the coxcomb into his intercourse with every one of the sex, as rendered him ridiculous to many.

With men, he was a coxcomb after a different fashion. An ingenious talent of imitating trifling productions — of the pen and pencil; and a knack of combining the passages of different masters in music, so as to make them pass for his own production, invested him with the title and privileges of genius: restlessness under domestic restraint, added to the cravings of vanity, he mistook for the prompting of a spirit destined to atchieve wonders; while that childish unwillingness to calculate probabilities, which self-love denominates heroism, appeared to

him an unerring testimony that he was born for great things.

With this opinion of himself, ever floating on the surface of his shallow mind, La Marot would have been the most insufferable of companions, except for a certain *gaieté de cœur*, which imparted something of the agreeable to his manner, and preserved his temper in uniform sweetness. No one, whose interest it was not to probe him too closely, chose to find the secret of this, in self-complacency, and total want of delicate feeling.

During a life of fifty-two years, so light and vain a character had made the Baron alternately the dupe of his own folly, and of other men's wickedness: it had turned him successively into a courtier, a soldier, a speculator in commercial schemes and gambling chances, a chemist, a political enthusiast, a student in polemics, and a director of public diversions: it had dissipated, in truth, nearly the whole of a fortune, never large; involved him in

debts and law-suits; but was now, luckily, taking the bent of agricultural improvement.

The property round chateau Roche Blanc, afforded its Baron room for the practice of some new-fangled theories, about the growth of saffron, and vine-dressing: the simple labourers, amongst whom he busied himself, listened to his babbling rhapsodies with outward awe and inward obstinacy; never carrying the lessons they were thus taught on their lord's ground, into their own patch of vineyard, but successfully substituting wonder and admiration in the place of obedience.

La Marot's religion had as little principle in it as his other opinions: he was, however, a member of the Reformed Church; perhaps, because the Reformation was itself a novelty, and the disputes of its professors with the doctors of the Romish schools, furnished a talker with perpetual themes of declamation. His

paternal inheritance placed him, most fortunately for his family, under the government of a prince known to favour the new doctrines. Anthony Bourbon, titular King of Navarre, and actual Lord of Bearn, in consequence of his marriage with the heiress of both principalities, was the sovereign in question; and protected by him, in common with Protestant refugees from less tolerant countries, La Marot pursued his visionary fancies at home, or followed the *Ignis Fatuus* of them abroad; satisfied that he might abide with, or return to his family, at will, in perfect security.

Madame his wife, though past forty, and retaining neither the vivacity nor vanity of a beauty, was still singularly handsome. Of an unhappy, rather than a violent temper, and selfishly inattentive to the comfort of those around her, she gradually lost their affections, without comprehending the cause, or making a single effort to retain them. Still, how-

ever, she expected, and exacted from her family, all those sacrifices and observances which love only can render easy; and absorbed in one object, her youngest child by the Baron, she seemed to consider the offspring of a first marriage, merely as a creature more peculiarly her own, to devote to this child's service.

Aigline de Venzéles, the unhappy being thus devoted, had no recollection of her own father: he fell in battle when she was just born. All she knew of him was, that he belonged to an ancient Catholic family in Normandy, whom he had offended by marrying, while on service, her mother, the daughter of a Genevese minister. After her father's death, she was told, that none of his relations had ever inquired the fate of his widow and child: but she was not told that he had left his widow and child a respectable competence, in the shape of certain lands, which had long since vanished in one of her stepfather's many

abortive schemes of making money, and getting himself talked of.

Aigline was therefore dependent upon that stepfather for the support, his unthinking selfishness, and her mother's criminal indifference, had deprived her of: and too young to have enquired the particulars of the transaction, or to have comprehended its unfairness had she been informed of it at the time, she was accustomed to hear the Baron de Roche Blanc's kindness to her, lauded by servants and sycophants, until she believed herself bound to him by the strongest ties of obligation. So easy is it to plant and ripen gratitude in a generous soil!

To her mother, Aigline was submissive, respectful, and anxious of pleasing: she would have been caressing; but never had that cold and self-centered mother called forth, by a single endearment, any of those shows of fondness which are natural to early youth. All that Aigline did, which was well, was passed by as a

matter of course; whatever she neglected, or performed imperfectly, was noticed with quick displeasure.

The Baroness's family, by her present husband, consisted of one daughter three years younger than Aigline, a son, and another girl little beyond infancy.

Lolótte, the eldest of this family, was living at a distance with a relation; Cecile, the youngest, was a pretty, spoiled, fractious creature; and the boy—neither better nor worse than other ordinary boys—was placed with a sort of tutor at Pau, who was educating him to be what this chimerical father intended him to turn out, a shining light either in church or state.

Aigline, consequently, only saw her brother occasionally, when he came for a few days' holiday to his home: and though the Baroness went every year into Languedoc to visit her second daughter, as her eldest was never allowed to be of the party, the little memory Aigline had

of her sister, died away: companions of her own sex and age, except amongst the peasantry, there were none at Roche Blanc; so that Aigline's affections might be considered as nipped at the very root. Still, however, childhood, health, a happy temper, and yet happier ignorance of more endearing characters, gave her spirits to disregard her mother's repulsiveness, and her little sister's tyranny; so that her tears of a moment, were quickly dispersed by the smiles of constitutional hilarity.

In the cottages of the peasants, listening to their legends, or on the margin of the Gave, plaiting rushes and flowers into coronets for their children, she forgot the disagreeables of her home; and it was in consequence of this blessed oblivion, that she was for ever playing truant without doors, and for ever incurring fresh reproaches from her hard task-mistress within.

As Aigline grew up, new sources of

enjoyment opened upon her. The glories of the heavens, and the beauties of the earth, awakened her faculties, engaged her attention, stimulated her curiosity, and supplied her with subjects of delightful reverie through many an hour of monotonous plain work.

Books, she had none: for the Baron, like most sovereigns of a limited territory, was ready to dispute every inch of intellectual ground with a rival; and Aigline, early forbidden to meddle with his flimsy collection, learned to think from the great book of Nature, — to feel, alas, from the dark volume of life.

Under these circumstances, Aigline grew from infancy to the age of ten; when an English gentleman of the name of Willoughby, took up his abode at Roche Blanc. He was one of those unfortunate persons who, at the time Henry of England sought the life of Anne Boleyn, had been injuriously suspected of an improper intercourse with that ill-fated

Queen. Conscious that there were circumstances in his private history which might give a colour to this accusation, and some enemies ready to take advantage of those circumstances, he converted his land into money, and fled with a young bride to the continent. There he travelled, unknown and unmolested, during the remaining years of the domestic tyrant's life, and the short reign of his successor; sojourning, as convenience tempted him, in different parts, until the accession of Mary, and her marriage with Philip of Spain, extinguished those hopes which were fed by the expectation of seeing Elizabeth preferred before her.

Mr. Willoughby had early embraced the principles of the Reformed Church, a circumstance which of itself was sufficient to bar his return to England, while a Catholic sovereign held the sceptre: in addition to which, he was known to have been either the lover or friend of Elizabeth's mother; and was not likely, there-

fore, to find safety in a country, over which the successful rival of Elizabeth now reigned. He deemed it most prudent, consequently, to forget alike disappointments and hopes; educate the only child his deceased wife had left him, in safe obscurity; and so take thankfully the large portion of good, allotted him by Providence.

With these views Mr. Willoughby entered Bearn; and, attracted by the romantic beauty and retiredness of Roche Blanc, as much as by the conviction of protection in the exercise of his religion, became the purchaser of a stately, though somewhat dilapidated mansion, belonging to a dissipated courtier.

L'étoile, the residence thus chosen, stood on a broad stage of the mountain, just above Roche Blanc. The house took its name from the striking appearance of a torrent in its vicinity. This impetuous stream, after bathing many a winding pasture and sombre dell of higher

vallies, gradually descended towards those of a less elevated region: there, lost for a time among the deep umbrage of woods, and swelled by other streams, it flowed in darkness and silence over a sloping bed; till having reached the abrupt face of the cliff, it issued suddenly from a vault of verdure, pouring its accumulated waters down a succession of wooded steeps, with equal beauty and magnificence. These numerous falls, sparkling in the light, among the overhanging trees of the chateau, suggested to the fancies of the country-people, the idea of a star; and the name of L'étoile thus given to it, insensibly became its general designation.

The property round L'étoile was productive and well-tenanted; so that its purchaser was entitled to that respectful consideration which an easy fortune is thought to merit.

Besides this claim on the notice of his neighbours, Mr. Willoughby's appearance was prepossessing, his manners were gen-

tle, and his habits inoffensive; his fading countenance and peculiarly-toned voice, had just as much melancholy in their expression, as creates interest without spreading gloom: though he seldom caused others to smile, he was easily made to smile himself; and rarely suffered a remark to escape him in the company of the young, calculated to damp their mirth, or to cast an appalling shadow over the bright path they expected life would prove to them,—thus he was generally liked, even though he appeared seldom in society, and said little when he was there.

Not that Mr. Willoughby was destitute of subjects and powers for conversation: he was in truth an indefatigable reader; but pursuing that occupation solely as a blameless way of filling up time, he did not leave sufficient intervals between the perusal of distinct works, for any clear arrangement of their subjects, or much exercise of his own original capacity.

Mr. Willoughby, consequently, was not

distinguished by depth of thought: his intellect, in truth, rather sought repose than action; and the easiness of a temper which considered the every-day occurrences of life not worth a contest, being coupled with this passiveness of mind, made him appear to less advantage in the company of more energetic or argumentative talkers, than he really merited.

This, perhaps, might be one reason why he showed no regret of that highly-intellectual society which is rarely to be enjoyed beyond the limits of great cities.

Greatly, however, as learning and talent exalt their possessor in our estimation, it is the kindly heart which awakens affection; and Mr. Willoughby's charity to the poor, and forbearance to the faults and impertinences of their superiors, made him justly dear to his neighbours, his servants, and his son.

However shy Mr. Willoughby was of society, from the hour of his settlement at Roche Blanc, he saw that an intimacy

with its proprietor was unavoidable. The Chateau and L'étoile, were the only respectably-inhabited houses within familiar reach of each other; so that common benevolence on one side, and ordinary thankfulness on the other, producing offers of service from the native resident, and grateful returns from the new-comer, made daily messages or visits almost a necessity. Mr. Willoughby was a heaven-send to the small stock of La Marot's enjoyments; for to him, a new auditor was every thing; happy vanity converting the listener instantly into an admirer. But to the quiet Englishman, La Marot became soon only a trial of patience; and he submitted to the frequent infliction of his company, solely out of gratitude, that curiosity was not usually the concomitant of restless self-conceit.

The Baron's dove-tailed compositions for the violin, his attempts at oil-painting, his flippant poetics, and bombastic recitations, were severally paraded before

his new acquaintance, during their evening meetings; while of morning's, more serious subjects took the lead; and Mr. Willoughby was hurried through endless labyrinths of metaphysics and divinity, law, politics and husbandry, till his every faculty was out of breath. He soon, however, found out an easy expedient for saving them this useless fatigue: he suffered his companion to talk, without deeming it necessary to take greater notice of his voluble discourse, than an occasional "Indeed," "Yes, I believe you;" and if the delight was therefore all on the side of the latter, who lived upon the supposed effects he produced, the other calmly amused that better half of his attention which he thought it no sin to withhold from nonsense, by admiring the beautiful country over which they were walking.

In this manner five years passed away; during which, the frequent absences of the Baron, and the constant residence of

Mr. Willoughby, unavoidably rendered the latter, in some degree, a sort of guardian to the unprotected family at the Chateau.

La Marot had always some new meteor to follow far from his home, either in the shape of a suit at court, or one at law; or some plan of *impossible improvement* with which to torment men in office; or old imaginary services to rake up and claim reward for; or the hope of getting a grant to re-open certain mines that had once belonged to his grandfather, and so completely ruin himself:—or something, in short, which ever carried him off, on the broad plumes of lavish expenditure and preposterous expectation, to return, stripped of every feather, and robbed of every mark.

While he was away, Mr. Willoughby considerately watched over the concerns of the Baroness and her children; not unfrequently affording them that pecuniary assistance, which the thoughtless

parent and husband seemed to forget was necessary; and when the latter came back, he now and then conquered his natural aversion to interference with others, so far as to remonstrate with him upon the vanity of such pursuits, and to direct his views towards safer ones.

To such remonstrances, La Marot gave smiling attention while they lasted, answered with seeming candour, launching at once into such an ocean of talk, that Mr. Willoughby drew back in affright; while blowing opposite arguments from every point of the moral compass, the adventurous Baron quietly saw himself left to navigate his own vessel his own way, through this storm of his own raising.

Thus no actual disagreement ever occurred between the elders of the families at Roche Blanc and L'étoile: meanwhile, sympathy and similarity united two of the younger in truer friendship. Aigline de Venzéles and Clarence Willoughby were become like brother and sister.

There was not above two years difference in the ages of these young persons: —as children of ten and twelve, they had felt the same desire of exploring the pathless parts of the surrounding woods, and the gorges of the mountains, to discover new haunts for themselves; they had watched the growth of favorite wild-flowers in the same clefts of the rocks; found the same pleasure in climbing up to their fearful gardens, through difficulty and danger; and thrilled over the same stories of ghost and goblin.

As they advanced towards youth, equal sympathy of tastes and pursuits continued to blend their lives together; or rather, the ductile nature of Aigline, invariably following the lead of what she loved, taught her to find delight in all that pleased Clarence. He courted novelties and perils for their own sake; she encountered them for his: and, as when they were children, his laughing reproach or encouraging invitation, would bring her

shuddering over the slender tree that bridged a torrent, so, at a later period, his ardent sensibility to all that stimulates men to become candidates for distinction, was able to fire her tender heart with enthusiasm for subjects otherwise foreign to a woman's thoughts.

There was, indeed, a most extraordinary mixture of fervor and softness in Agiline's character and conversation, which seemed as though nature had created her expressly to fill the void places in Clarence Willoughby's heart:—he had neither brother nor sister; and he loved Aigline, therefore, as if she were both those tender relations;—loved her with an energy which colored his expressive complexion with its liveliest vermillions, whenever they conversed together. She, in return, saw every thing through Clarence's eyes; felt every thing as he felt it; enjoyed no pleasure without him; hoarded up for him every little event or saying that had amused her when he was

not by; and imagined for him, through the long life before them, such a series of adventures, illustrious deeds, and astonishing honors, as never yet fell to the share of one mortal.

Clarence was the first person that taught Aigline the precious secret of finding happiness in reading. Seated in some green nook of the mountains, they read together the books which he took at will out of his father's library; these were invariably of one description; —tales of chivalry. Insensibly the stronger character impelled the softer; and Aigline, poring over histories where valour was taken for all the virtues, by the side of the ardent boy whose face burnt with the emulation they excited, learnt to prize deeds of arms, to covet fame for those she loved, and to imagine that life spent in humble usefulness, was life wasted.

As Mr. Willoughby had an obvious distaste of such subjects, and as Baron

de Roche Blanc treated chivalric memorials with contempt, neither Aigline nor Clarence ventured to discuss their favorite themes in their presence; much less in that of Madame la Baronne. But when wandering through their leaf-strewn haunts by themselves, these young enthusiasts would talk over the wondrous world of castles and camps, and the feats of the heroes who graced them; stimulating each other's admiration into a perfect passion; often did Clarence's longing after the perils and rewards of glory, rise to such impatience, that the blood, beating through his temples with alarming quickness, would sometimes frighten Aigline into tears, at others provoke her to laughter. But Aigline partook his enthusiasm too sincerely, to laugh at it in her heart; and Clarence, assured of her thorough sympathy, indulged in his favorite study, and built fairy edifices of his own future achievements, without dread of ridicule, or fear of wearying his companion.

The kindly boy repaid Aigline's tender interest in what was most interesting to him, by the warmest interest in her gentler pursuits; he would also have cheerfully sacrificed his minor tastes and most agitating habits at her desire, had she shown an inclination for him to do so. But Aigline's exceeding affection, made her ever unwilling to deprive him of a single pleasure, let his enjoyment of it cost her what pain it might. His passion for dangerous sports, and his habit of wandering away in quest of more savage game than was to be found near Roche Blanc, often caused her pangs of sudden apprehension; but these were forgotten the instant she heard the happy tone of his voice; and while she listened to his animated narrations of adventure or pursuit, and looked upon his countenance, full of all that promises protection to itself and others, every trace of uneasiness vanished from hers. Clarence, therefore, never dreamed that, not a moment

before, the very eyes that now brightly smiled at the relation of his hair-breadth 'scapes, had been shedding tears over the mere supposition of them.

Thus Aigline's almost faulty tenderness, prevented her from making judicious use of her power over generous but thoughtless affection; and by uniformly bending her wishes before his, she unwarily increased the difficulty of self-conquest to him, in the years of trial which awaited them both.

CHAP. II.

Clarence Willoughby's was, indeed, a character to fear and to hope much from; it was full of danger and delightfulness.

Ardent, impetuous, nice in the objects of his affection, and boundless in that affection when once bestowed, — he needed a guide, and in Aigline he had only a companion. Even now, at a boyish age, his character was too much for his father's grasp; and as such, was left nearly to its own moulding.

All Mr. Willoughby's inclinations being rather mild than vehement, he found little trouble in resigning them to please others; so that Clarence, without being conscious of it, was every day more and more in danger of being rendered selfish, by his father's unceasing sacrifices

of trifles, to his headlong humour of the moment.

If such selfishness be engrafted on a vivid character, by mistaken indulgence, experience of the mischief their self-gratification does to others, gradually overcomes it; and the kindest anxiety not to pain or injure, quickly succeeds to former thoughtlessness. But if selfishness be the native offspring of such a character, the increase of the evil passion is frightful; and its gigantic growth, soon dislodges every valuable quality from the breast of its possessor.

What early indulgence and late discipline might make of Clarence at thirty, remained to be seen; at sixteen or seventeen, he was delightful enough to be pardoned many more faults than fell to his share.

Among his self-taught habits, as has been observed, was that of penetrating into the heart of the mountains; roving there for days together with his dogs, his

hunting spear, or his bow, professedly in search of game, but oftener in pursuit of new subjects for mirth or speculation, when he returned home. The danger of a possible encounter with banditti, was comparatively small to one, whose boyish age and simple attire held out no temptation to plunder. He was too expert in the use of the bow, to render even the savage animals of those wild regions, a subject of apprehension to his friends; and when his agile figure was seen springing from cliff to cliff, like a young eagle on the wing, it was not possible for them to imagine him in peril, even upon the dizziest precipice.

That agile figure and inviting aspect, were his best protectors amongst a hardy race like the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, to whom activity of body, and joyousnesss of spirit, were peculiarly dear. His bright countenance and sportive humour, ensured him food and shelter at the poorest cabin; and the fearlessness with

which he trod their dangerous steeps, or joined the secret desperado, unwittingly, in his gloomiest haunts, made him equally free from personal insult. Thus Mr. Willoughby had no rational dread of his son falling a prey to robbers, or being left unhoused and unfed; and he therefore quietly gave way to the boy's vagrant inclination.

Clarence was in fact the darling of the mountaineers, bad and good; for at his age, and with his character, we do not readily give ourselves to the rigid task of weighing the merits of those we can serve. In summer, he frequently turned out of his way, and suspended his sylvan sports, to assist the honest herdsman in his search after a lost goat or a strayed heifer; and in winter, when the families of the Pyrenean shepherd came down into the vallies, to shelter them during the season of frost and snow, leaving the humbler guardian of their flocks to endure the rigours of the season by himself, Clarence

would often volunteer a visit to this desolate person, braving many a snow-tempest, merely for the good-natured purpose of cheering him with news of his wife and children, or of gladdening him with the sight of a human face.

With equal kindliness, but less meritoriously, did he sometimes lend his aid to conceal the contraband wines and wool of Spain, when indiscreetly purchased by his tempted hosts, and threatened with seizure; even the lawless Spaniards themselves, who brought these commodities at the risk of their lives, never hesitated applying to the young Englishman, when his presence of mind, or fertility of expedient, might save either themselves or their cargo. Clarence, thus appealed to, lectured them tolerably well upon their mode of life; but helped them, notwithstanding. Perhaps he would have deemed it a baseness, not to have sold his life in defence of one of these bold, bad men, after having once engaged to stand his friend.

When he returned home from such excursions, their various incidents, never failed to become either agitating, or entertaining, as he related them. What he saw, and what he felt, he narrated with a truth and vivacity, which borrowed additional charms from the carelessness with which he spoke.

The primitive habits of the shepherds, and the desperate ones of the Arragonese smuggler; the crests of the mountainous chain he scaled; the sublime prospects he beheld from those awful heights; — nay, even the forms of the clouds above his head, and the soaring of the solitary eagle, whose flight he watched amongst their dazzling masses, — all these things became, in Clarence's hands, picturesque and inviting.

His power of exciting laughter and gaiety too, was exhaustless; not a trait of what is called *character*, ever escaped him. In his casual intercourse with foreigners and peasants, he was sure to

catch any amusing peculiarity of their manner or mode of thinking, and repeat them with a charm of look and action, far beyond mimicry, because it kept all the spirit of the original, without retaining its coarser flavor.

The speaking countenance of the boy heightened the effect of his conversation; for his clear, though rather ardent complexion, coloured so expressively while he conversed, that a succession of varying tints were seen chasing each other across his cheek, as swiftly as shade and sunshine do over the grass of the field; rendering that cheek nearly as expressive as his eyes.

The soul of Clarence, indeed, gave such peculiar life to his looks, words, and actions, that it seemed breathed into him to stir into wholesome and delightful exercise, the slower natures by which it might be surrounded; and then to join in the same rapid stream, with those of a brighter and swifter course.

Enthusiastic as Clarence was in the admiration of inanimate nature, and passionately as he loved such sylvan amusements as are ennobled by personal danger, he appeared best adapted for society. Even when a child, what he had to learn he preferred learning by conversation rather than from books; observation of the human countenance at that early age, and of human character when he grew older, was to him an inexhaustible source of entertainment. Clarence's feelings, too, were all social; for though he certainly preferred roaming alone through the whispering aisles of the woods, to the busy nothingness of Baron Roche Blanc's conversation as to the continued limitation of his father's regulated walks, he never caught a glorious burst of country, without wishing for his father; nor ever returned from any of his wild excursions, without having picked up some traveller, from whom his own charm of humour had elicited something of correspondent

agreeableness. What their rank might be, he cared not; rest and hospitality being never denied by Mr. Willoughby to any of his son's chance acquaintance.

Such lawless habits of mind and body in so young a person, perhaps contributed to render both vigorous; but they also made restraint of every kind disgustful to him. Thus he was not easily got to give up exercise for study. The fertility of his own fancy, and the amusement he derived from observing the peculiarities of those about him, made him incredulous of the greater pleasure which he was told resulted from science. He enjoyed the mere movement of his own faculties too much, not to turn with something of impatience from the passive state to which *he said* they were reduced, whenever he sat down to a scientific work. The perusal of some brave knight's adventures, or the events of some favorite period of history, were not liable to this objection; so that to such reading alone,

did he voluntarily devote his hours. Escaped from drier study, in this, his heart, his soul, his whole being, became absorbed; and the noblest energies, as well as the liveliest passions of his nature, were then called into action.

Thus accustoming himself to find pleasure solely when he was strongly moved, Clarence was unconsciously feeding the fires of a disposition, already too ardent for its own peace; and acquiring a distaste for such purely intellectual pursuits, as form our most valuable resource, when age or disappointments have wearied us with life and its passions.

The brightness of his son's native powers, and the buoyant animation of the spirits which accompanied them, blinded Mr. Willoughby to the hazard of leaving him almost entirely master of his own occupations; he thought Clarence capable of being every thing, whenever he chose to be any thing; forgetting, that habits of application and self-denial are worth

all the talent in the world without them; and are not to be acquired at will.

Satisfied with instilling the broad principles of piety, truth and justice, he unwisely trusted to his son's voluntary act hereafter, for attention to the peculiar line of study which his destiny might then demand; and for the moderating of those rash and excessive sensibilities, which now courted danger and sought indulgence, without fear or reservation.

What Mr. Willoughby destined his son for, or whether he destined him for any thing beyond the life of passive exile which he himself was calmly supporting, no one knew,—perhaps no one cared to enquire,—except the son in question; and he was checked by habitual respect.

Sometimes, however, Clarence ventured to sound his father's intentions respecting him, by repeating the public news he gathered in his occasional rides to the towns of Loues and Tarbes, expressing a hope that he was

not always to remain in useless retirement.

In Bearn, at this period, the great names of the day, were naturally those of their sovereign, Anthony, Duke de Vendôme, and of his youngest brothers, the Count d'Enghien, and the Prince de Condé.

At the moment of which we speak, the year 1557, a truce of five years had already commenced between the hostile monarchs of France and Spain; leaving the chiefs who espoused their quarrel, to wear, amid bright eyes and blushing cheeks, the laurels they had gathered amongst the dying and the dead!

But the martial exploits of both rival powers, were too recent, not to form frequent subjects of discourse, long after they had occurred, amongst the inhabitants of the Pyrenean towns; and Clarence, therefore, heard successively, all the details of this celebrated war.

At Loues, he possessed a living chronicle of past and passing events, in the

person of an old pensioner, called Gôdefroi, who had served in the army of Vendôme, when young; and who retained so lively an admiration of what is really admirable in the heroic character, that although he gave his military details with rude simplicity, he never omitted any trait of that generosity, which ennobles valour.

To this old soldier, Clarence often repaired, attracted by the subjects of his conversation, and pleased so to lighten the dark hours of declining age.

Godefroi's forefathers had for several generations served humbly, either in the household, or in the troops of the Bourbons; it was natural, therefore, that he should be familiar with all the public, and most of the private anecdotes, of that illustrious race. He spoke of them with the attachment of a devoted follower, but without prejudice; contrasting in awful picture, the disastrous vengeance of the famous Connétable, in the last age,

with the impregnable fidelity of his contemporary cousins, Vendôme and St. Pol. Then reverting to their common ancestor, the good and magnificent Duke de Bourbon, the friend of Du Guesclin, Godefroi fascinated his eager hearer's attention, by that view of obsolete and venerable manners, which he was enabled to afford.

The old soldier's great uncle had been one of the inferior priests in the chapel of this excellent Prince; and he had left a precious morsel of private memoir, in the shape of a little volume, written by himself, in bad antiquated Latin, but understood through dint of intense study by our youthful hero.

In this MS., Clarence not only read that catalogue of Duke Louis's great deeds in arms, which history records and honors; but a description of the life he led at Moulines, after he had retired thither from Paris; when the court of the unhappy Charles VI. was become a prey to such poverty and disorder, that the

Duke's revenues were found inadequate to the demands made upon them, by his own pity, and his royal kinsman's retainers.

With what delirium of delight and emulation, did our enthusiast pore over pages quaintly illuminated by the laborious monk, with gaudy coats of arms, fantastic devices, and uncouth portraits of the various worthies his text described! A view of the grand Banquetting Hall, with Bourbon seated there, surrounded by his brave compeers, and listening with them, to a Provençal tale, read aloud while they ate, — was so agreeable to Clarence's thirst for every memorial of the chivalric ages, and became so blended with his notions of heroes, that long after his educated taste rejected similar daubs, it could contemplate this, with the transport of early association.

How ardently, while gazing on it, did he sigh for those days to return, when each great prince lived surrounded by

warlike adventurers, attracted from different countries; whose previous renown, added to their lord's glory; and who, bearing the honorable title of *Chevaliers de l'Hotel*, shared his dangers in war, and his delights in peace!

Venerable, indeed, was the period, during which the chateaux of the great seigniors of France were made schools for honor, courtesy, and accomplished exercises; when the different owners of these chateaux sought distinction from the number of their noble retainers, and the splendour with which they supported them! For though, in truth, all their ideas of greatness centered in military prowess, leaving little leisure or inclination for the cultivation of letters, they ennobled the profession of arms, by making its members the servants of the helpless and oppressed; and by rigidly exacting from every warrior of gentle blood, the lofty virtues of disinterestedness, purity, and immaculate honor.

These exalted virtues, supposed inseparable from personal bravery, and depicted happily enough in Godefroi's MS., formed a dazzling mirror, in which a cooler mind than that of Clarence's might have longed solely to dress itself. Such virtues are, indeed, those with which generous youth has most sympathy. At a very early age, we are capable of admiring the marked qualities of intrepidity, devotedness, and contempt of personal indulgence; but to be struck with the magnanimity of conquering our passions, and denying ourselves even blameless enjoyments for a good purpose, we must have felt such passions, and refused such pleasures, ourselves.

Clarence's young spirit could therefore follow without difficulty, the simple yet sublime track of these antique worthies; while in the mazes of the more complicated virtues, and closer-sifted characters of their variously-tempted descendants, he was lost.

Less skilled in romantic legends than his boyish auditor, and naturally inclined to speak of scenes in which he had been himself an actor, Godefroi would suddenly turn from these annals of past centuries, to the period of his own service, the early part of the sixteenth.

He had served then under a Bourbon, that famous Count de St. Pol, known as the dear friend of Francis I. and the companion of Bayard. Godefroi was proud to avow himself one of that formidable band known by the name of *Les six milles diables*, and distinguished in French military history by their being the first body of infantry headed by a Prince of the Blood. These brave men achieved the work which St. Pol destined for them — that of removing the odium then thrown upon infantry, and rendering it equally honorable for a great seignior to lead either species of troops to combat.

In mentioning this circumstance, the

sensible old man failed not to dwell upon the true magnanimity it evinced in St. Pol, then young, and jealous of honor. To brave scorn, was the only species of courage of which a French chevalier was deemed incapable: this young commander risked it, created a band of heroes, and vanquished a prejudice.

By Clarence, to whom the darts of undeserved ridicule were unknown, this merit was faintly perceived; neither did he feel that fearful interest his zealous instructor expected, in the love and lawsuit, which drove the great Connétable de Bourbon into exile and rebellion. A stainless heart could not understand, how the woman who adored a hero at one time, could pursue him with relentless fury at another; still less could he understand the phrenzy of a noble mind like Bourbon's, on the spoliation of mere wealth.

The inexperienced Clarence dreamt not that in this mercenary world, power

and consideration vanish with the resources of princes! The whole history of that too-celebrated warrior, like a day of storm, was awful, and sometimes splendid, yet dismal to dwell on, since it set in blood, and went out in darkness: it was not wonderful, then, that Clarence should prefer to it the praises of contemporary merit. Anthony, Duke de Vendôme, now King of Navarre; François de Bourbon, the conqueror at Cerisolles, whom a cruel accident ravished from life and glory; the Count d'Enghien, and the Prince de Condé; these brothers were the personages he took pleasure in hearing described.

But the last, and to him most interesting, was one nearer his own age; Adhémar de Bourbon, Viscomte de Limoges.

This young man was the illegitimate son of the hero of Cerisolles, by a lady too closely allied to the Duke de Guise, not to add another argument to the many

which kept up the animosity of the two rival houses — Bourbon and Lorraine.

The honorable suit of François de Bourbon, then under age, had been haughtily repelled by the lady's kindred: love, possibly resentment, urged him to continue their intercourse; they met in private. The consequence of these imprudent meetings, under such circumstances, in that age of disorder, when every irregularity was permitted to a Prince of the Blood, may be imagined; and while the repentant lover was seeking death on the Italian frontier, then menaced by the Emperor, the unfortunate Mademoiselle de Briquemart paid the forfeit of life for her criminal weakness.

The child to which she gave untimely birth, was immediately conveyed away by a confidential servant, and afterwards consigned to the arms of its father. No efforts of the Guises, who shuddered at leaving such a memorial of family dis-

grace in the possession of their enemy, could force him to part with it. Equally awed by François de Bourbon's relationship to the throne, and by the fear of giving publicity to a circumstance now only suspected, the proud House of Lorraine smothered their indignation; ever afterwards affecting to treat the boy in question, as the base-born offspring of a Prince and a peasant.

Nine years afterwards, ere he had attained the age of thirty, François de Bourbon perished by a mysterious accident, at La Roche-Guyon; leaving his orphan son to the protection of his brothers. The anxious parent had previously secured to his boy the title and estate of Limoges, and this bequest not only gave Adhemar a decided place in society, but enabled him to support a train better suited to the quality of his parents, than to the peculiarity of his own birth. His first years were spent at Vendôme, with his uncle Anthony, ere

the marriage of the latter with the heiress of Navarre, and the subsequent death of her parents, carried him thence to his new kingdom: after that, Adhemar became the especial care of his youngest uncle, Condé. At the chateaux of both Princes, Adhemar had been treated by their numerous party with that submissive respect paid to scions from a royal stock. In France, at this era, when thus educated and presented, they were understood to be in the path of such legitimacy, as, in those arbitrary days, could be granted by letters patent from the King,—such legitimacy as had, indeed, been frequently obtained by the spurious branches of the House of Bourbon, under the reign of the Valois'; and which, when granted, opened every family succession, even that of the crown itself, to their ambition.

The Viscomte de Limoges was now one-and-twenty: at sixteen he had made his first campaign under his uncles

d'Enghien and Condé, then young men of only four or five-and-twenty, as greedy of glory for themselves as for their nephew. At the siege of Metz, it was Adhemar's audacious ardor which prompted and compassed the theft of the keys of the city, when the Duke de Guise, who commanded there, had forbidden a continuance of those frequent sorties which were made, at fearful risk, by a few boiling spirits.

Escaping with his uncle Condé, in spite of every precaution and threat, the dreadless Adhemar, disguised like him in the habit of a common volunteer, would mix with other desperate adventurers, fall upon the enemy's outposts or convoys, and snatch admiration in defiance of reproof. At the termination of a siege so glorious for the arms of France, and so humiliating to those of the Empire and Spain, the young Adhemar received the honor of knighthood from the hands of Guise himself. Although the Houses

of Lorraine and Bourbon were political rivals, and religious enemies,—although the stripling hero was a living memento of the severest humiliation their family had ever incurred, the Duke de Guise was too noble-minded not to recognize the extraordinary valour of a boy, in scenes which might have quailed the stoutest heart of man; and as such, he placed the first honorary stamp upon his breast.

In many actions succeeding this, the new chevalier kept up the promise of his first essay: but on the proclamation of a five years' truce, at the close of the year 1556, he retired with his uncle Condé to his chateau near Meaux, where he resumed an early habit of study; proving himself as passionate for learning, as he had shown himself for fame.

Great were the expectations raised by such conduct, in the friends of his House; and they who remembered his accomplished father's youth, loved to

predict equal renown, with a happier fate, for the son.

This young man's military fame having commenced at the age which Clarence had now passed, rendered him an object of generous envy to one equally smit with the love of arms. When he repeated at Roche Blanc what he heard of older warriors, he could speak with subdued vivacity; but whenever the subject of the Viscomte de Limoges presented itself, his impetuous feelings hurried him away: and one day, having heard it rumoured at Tarbes that war was talked of again, he could no longer restrain the desire that news awakened, but at once astonished his father by a passionate request for permission, in such a case, to become a soldier.

Mr. Willoughby was for a moment or two, unable to speak from mere surprise: recovering himself, with a smile, he reminded his son, that the same time of life does not always bring with it the

same knowledge; that he had lived entirely remote from military instruction; while the Chevalier Adhemar had been cradled, as it were, on a shield, nursed by heroes, and taught the elements of their fearful profession along with his native tongue.

Upon this remark, the secret of Clarence's favourite studies blazed forth. With the vivacity, nay, almost beautiful presumption of youth conscious of latent powers, he declared himself ready, at any time, to encounter the odds of entering the lists with older competitors in the same race, without their previous education: assured that determination is omnipotence; and that with a heart fearing nothing,—a heart burning only for glory, and a capacity to learn whatever he loved to learn, he might confidently aspire, to what others so inspired, had reached before him.

Clarence was too young for the weighing of interest against interest;

probability against certainty: he never enquired what patron was to draw him from the crowd of volunteers, as dauntless and ambitious as himself: as yet, he saw only the glory of "scorning delights, and living laborious days;" he thirsted only for the strong excitement of dangers and difficulties; and he felt only, that the consciousness of being something more than all around him were, or seemed to dream of, was necessary to his existence.

Startled by this confession of his son's unsuspected familiarity with the subject in question, and embarrassed how to answer his impetuous questionings as to what his view in life ought to be, the timid Mr. Willoughby knew not how to do so clearly, without laying open griefs and injuries, and awakening hopes, which he himself deemed it wisest to forget. He, therefore, took a middle course; reminding his son, that his services belonged to England, since his father

was a native of that country; and that it would be the height of folly, if no worse, to wed himself to the interests of a country in which he had no place, and where he had not one powerful friend. By entering the service of France, he would confound himself with mercenaries and Catholics; and at a time, too, when certain events might occur in England to render their return to it safe and expedient, opening the lawful gate to honourable ambition.

Mr. Willoughby confessed, that he disrelished all those professions which carried youth out of that sequestered path, which he had found, too late, was the only peaceful one. He asked him, if the unostentatious competence they lived in, was too narrow for his wishes? and if he could not remain contented, at least, till the situation of the Queen of England was ascertained, which must either sign the sentence of their perpetual exile, or give promise of speedy recall?

By this situation, Mr. Willoughby said he meant that appearance and indisposition of Mary, which the Catholics flattered themselves were to end in giving an heir to the throne, and the Protestants secretly hoped would prove the tokens of some mortal disease.

From the Princess Elizabeth (did she succeed Mary), both as a favourer of the new doctrines, and as the daughter of her in whose disgrace Mr. Willoughby's fortunes had been implicated, the latter reasonably expected protection; and thus much he represented to his son. But when Clarence, upon this encouragement, would have pressed for a more detailed account of their family history than he had gathered during childhood, his father's countenance assumed that air of dejection, and his manner that embarrassment, which evidently showed the subject was distressing to him. Similar appearances had often shielded him from Clarence's natural eagerness, when the

latter would otherwise have pursued his enquiries until perfectly informed. Silenced now, as formerly, by his own respectful consideration, the disappointed boy was obliged to remain content with believing, that he was not entitled to expect more from his probable destiny, than what the son of a common individual, self-banished by a tender conscience, might be supposed to regain, if ever a change of political relations should enable them to retake their place among the gentry of the land.

It was not possible for Clarence to decide otherwise; since there was no mystery in any of his father's habits, to warrant romantic fancies about his exile and loneliness. He had no correspondents, except ordinary ones, on the continent; and a cousin in England, from whom he now and then heard by some lucky chance. Clarence never heard of any other near relative, either on his father's or mother's side; and he was,

therefore, less disposed to wonder at his only parent's resignation to a destiny, which had fixed him far from his native land, in the midst of strangers.

Silenced, not convinced, by his father's mild disapproval of his fondest desire, Clarence sought the relief of pouring out his disappointment to Aigline. The only consolation her artless heart could devise, was grieving with him; and as her concern at the check given to his wishes, proved that she believed him capable of justifying their passionateness by answerable actions, perhaps such sort of consolation was the very best that could have been offered.

Clarence talked himself almost into tears of vexation; rushed away to hide them; returned to laugh at his foolish phrenzy; and, finally, resumed his wonted cheerfulness, after making the inward resolution, of one day, however late, realizing Aigline's partial opinion.

CHAP. III.

Almost immediately after this conversation with his father, Clarence tried to banish the mortification it caused him, by joining a party of young men from different villages, who had associated themselves for the purpose of a week's hunting among the mountains round Barêge.

A troop of remarkably ferocious wolves had for some time infested these mountains; continuing their ravages long after the period during which they are watched for. Kids, lambs, domestic animals, cattle, — nay, it was rumoured, even children, — had fallen victims to their fierce hunger. Herdsmen, shepherds, mothers, all were equally panic struck; so that it became an act of

humanity to effect the extirpation of this formidable enemy.

Permitted by his father to join in such an attempt, and receiving Aigline's fervent benediction on his laudable purpose, Clarence set out in the direction of Spain.

The scented air of spring, freshening and sweetening as the party ascended towards the region of innumerable wild flowers, blew in their faces, and exhilirated their spirits. New accounts of later ravages made by the fierce creatures they sought, stimulated Clarence's courage, while they increased his natural delight in giving protection; and by the time they had reached the point where they expected to obtain certain information of the wolves' haunts, he had forgotten courts, camps, and armies.

In consequence of what was told them by the inhabitants of Luchon, the resolute band separated, going different ways in pursuit of different victims. One was

said to have been seen that morning taking a southerly direction. Well armed, and fearless as active, Clarence broke away from the person who told him this, and took the shortest road to the place the peasant described as leading to the creature's den.

Leaping from point to point of the steep rocks, among which he was soon involved; descending some by the aid of the long branches of climbing plants, and ascending others by placing his light foot where it seemed as though the additional weight of a feather must loosen the frail support, and hurl him headlong down; springing over hideous chasms, and forcing his way through the actual wall formed by thorns of formidable growth and thickness, he came breathless out upon an open shelf of rock, just above a ravine, along which two mountain streams were pouring their united waters.

At this instant he caught sight of a

wolf, running straight towards a shepherd's hut, at a distance: to Clarence's agitated eyes, an object in front of this hut, appeared to be a sleeping child. It was the action of a moment after that to leap down into the ravine, to reach his object sooner. For a single instant, he believed that he should never rise again: the height from which he had cast himself, and the unusual body of water in this narrow channel, swoln, as it was, by melted snows, made it doubtful whether he should be able to recover from the stunning velocity with which he sunk.

But he did rise to the surface; and catching at the pendant branch of a cedar, which started out from the steep bank, and threw its giant boughs nearly over the stream, he swung himself to shore. At that instant the flash and report of fire-arms startled him, and he saw the wolf drop.

Half rejoiced, half disappointed, he

directed a glance towards a more elevated point, whence the shot had been fired: he saw there a young man, just recovering from the kneeling position in which he had taken aim. Another second, brought this person to his side.

The stranger was accompanied by five or six others, all dressed in the graceful hunting suits of that day; and young, like himself. But in the air and manner of the first, was that which rendered distinction of dress unnecessary. Friends would have called it a noble air; enemies might have given it a different appellation.

Whatever this air was, it was sufficiently striking to fix the attention of a novice like Clarence, whose eye and imagination were ever on the wing for new and agreeable impressions. He stood, momentarily admiring the perfect figure and speaking physiognomy of the stranger: the one was tall and

commanding; the other, dark and penetrating.

But the person he admired, took no further notice of him than by a glance, as he went onward; saying something, at the same time, to one of the gentlemen in his train.

The latter immediately came up to Clarence, courteously enquiring whether he had hurt himself in his bold attempt to cross the stream.

"Not in the least, Sir," was the prompt and cheerful answer; "a wetting is nothing. Thank you for asking."—Then going up to the first of the party, (who was now contemplating the fallen wolf,) he added, with the frank confidence of youth, "You have robbed me of my prey, Sir; however, I am heartily glad the pernicious animal is killed."

A cold reserve instantly took possession of the stranger's features: he moved several steps away; but quickly recovering his usual expression of countenance,

he said carelessly, "Young man, you are welcome to the creature's remains." He spoke with a smile, which, though it illuminated his dark complexion, and far darker eyes, into exceeding beauty, had an expression of condescendingness in it, which the quick-feeling Clarence could not brook: the blood rushed to his face; while drawing back, less precipitately and more imperiously than was usual with him, he said, "I never wear honors that I do not win," and disappeared.

As Clarence leaped down from steep to steep, startling the izard and the eagle, he thought he heard the voices of the party he had left, calling repeatedly after him; and once or twice he paused: but it might be only fancy, or the continuous roaring of the waters and woods in the wind; or the confusion of all these sounds by the mountain echoes. If it were so, it were better for him not to tempt mortification, by returning to ask what he was called for. For the

first time in his life, Clarence refused himself the indulgence of that kindly feeling, which ever prompted him to offer assistance where it might be required. If these hunters were new to the Pyrenees, they might really be in want of a guide; yet their guide he was determined not to become.

Piqued by the few words the most distinguished of the hunters had uttered, because they implied contumely of his supposed spirit, (Clarence guessed not that they sprung from a mistake of his rank,) and vexed at himself for the consciousness of a wish to make acquaintance with the stranger, our young hero ran himself out of breath, with mere anxiety to get as far away as possible. He stopped not till he found himself at that part of the elevated valley of Gavarnie, where the ascending path conducts the traveller to yet steeper levels; whence he beholds the solitary fortification, the embowered village, and

the foaming cataract, sunk successively below his feet.

At the point where Clarence paused, he looked down upon that sylvan bridge which crosses the Gave far below the pretty hamlet of Sia; its long ivies resting on the now tranquillized waters of the river, undulated slowly with their motion, and harmonized in colour with the deep shadows of the trees which overhang its course. Further on, his eye scaled the embattled rock of Escalette; and above that again, the towering pinnacles of the primordial mountains.

The fort itself, now but a picturesque ruin, then stood firm and entire: frowning from the beetling rock, which here overhangs the defile, it seemed sternly to regard, or calmly to disdain, the roaring of those numerous torrents, which, bursting out on every side from the mouths of caverns, from dark ravines, and impenetrable woods, as if impatient of all that barred their course to the

flowery Gave, dashed their waters over every obstacle with furious rapidity.

The sight of the fort, of its flinty rampart, and floating banner, gave a turn to Clarence's thoughts; and kindling with many a tale of French and Spanish chivalry, connected with its solitary tower, he stood for some time contemplating it: then wandered away, unconscious whither; thinking over all that had passed so lately, between his father and himself.

By what imperceptible strokes, sometimes, are our inclinations for a particular object urged forward, and by circumstances apparently foreign to that object! Unknown to himself at this moment, Clarence's impatience to enter the arena of the world, and struggle there for distinction, was heightened by the trifling slight he had just incurred. The young hunter, in making him the contemptuous surrender of his game, had treated him like a rustic, to whom the jealous deli-

cacy of the gentleman is unknown; and with this stinging thought rankling within him, Clarence felt more eager than ever to become something beyond the inglorious idler he deemed himself, and the ignoble one he seemed to be considered by another.

A thousand wild schemes for effecting this, as many for influencing his father to yield him the permission he sought, were occupying his heated brain, when the voice of tumult and altercation, in the Bearnese and Spanish tongues, issuing from a lower part of the mountain, hurried him to the scene whence it proceeded.

The noise was caused by two bands of French and Arragonese shepherds, who were fiercely engaged in one of those pitched battles so frequent in the Pyrenees; where the right of pasturage, on certain equivocal tracts of the range, is often disputed with the obstinacy and method of regular warfare.

These men had chosen for their theatre of strife an obscure glen, shaded by wild fruit trees, which had nearly covered with their aromatic blossoms the little rivulet that watered it: the delicious verdure of this spot, kept perpetually green by the moisture and the shade, was already sprinkled with blood. Two of the combatants were engaged at close quarters with their knives; while most of the others waged warier war from their slings.

The caverned hollows around reverberated the shouts of the men, the barking of their dogs, and the crashing of the stones, as they forced their way through the boughs of trees. Similar scenes were not new to Clarence; but such were not the fields his generous spirit thirsted for; and he ran, more rashly than wisely forward, to endeavour at parting the two deadliest combatants. His vehement expostulation was unattended to: the Spaniard, meanwhile,

disarmed, and threw down his adversary; and uttering an insulting menace, was brutally going to trample upon his body, when Clarence almost instinctively sprang at him, and dragged him from the fallen foe.

Insult and injury were now transferred to himself. With a scornful laugh, the Spaniard thought to have shaken off such a youth at once; but Clarence hung on him, like a dog of gallant breed on some lordly bull. His young strength was, however, no match for that of his opponent; yet so powerful did a dauntless spirit render him, for the short space of time necessary to the escape of the conquered Bearnese, that the Spaniard, in a transport of impatience, was just about to dart his knife into him, when some one rushing forward from behind, seized the ruffian's arm with one hand, while with the other they held a pistol to his breast.

The rescue was complete: the Spaniard

shrunk back; and Clarence, recovering with staggering recoil from his loosened gripe, saw that he owed his life to the stranger he had parted from so proudly, not three hours before.

Hurrying out a few words of animated thanks, he stood irresolute whether to go or stay: but his preserver decided the question, by laying his hand on his arm; at the same time addressing something, in a tone of authority, to one of the persons in his party. He spoke in Parisian French, and that so volubly, that Clarence lost the sense of what he said: but it was evident that the speech was a command; for the person spoken to, respectfully bowed at its conclusion, and went up to the Bearnese shepherds. His superior led Clarence away at once from the party.

There was a sparkle of pleasurable enquiry in his black eyes, as he bent them on Clarence; and an expression in his dark countenance, which effectually

banished the recollection of that supercilious air by which the latter had so lately been offended.

"We cannot escape acquaintance!" he said, familiarly. "Do you live hereabouts?"

Clarence named his place of residence with a second burst of grateful acknowledgment, and a frank-hearted confession of his past vexation. The hunter smiled, seemed struck with the ingenuousness of this confession, and pleased with its artlessness; but left it without remark. He mused an instant; then said abruptly, "You are not French, nor Spanish?"

The bright blue eyes of Clarence, which had probably prompted this question, brightened as he avowed his country and his name.

"Of English parents!" repeated his companion: "no marvel, then, that you knew the creed of honor! — '*I never wear honors that I do not win!*' — Was not that the phrase? It was no mere

mountaineer's — so we must be better acquainted. You shall oblige me with your company to supper this evening."

There was still a tone of command in the stranger's voice, flattering as was the manner that accompanied it.

Clarence stopped, eyed his companion; — then, half-smiling, — half-colouring, from the mixture of hardihood natural to his character, and of bashfulness incident to his youth, said hesitatingly, "I should like to know who I am talking with, — I should rather say, who I owe my life to?"

The young hunter smiled again. — "Pshaw! what is there in a name? Without knowing your's, the moment I heard the sentiment I liked so much, and saw your desperate support of that poor rogue below, I was determined to know you. If I can read looks, methinks you have taken a fancy to mine. Well, then, sup with me, and let us try each other's metal further. Would you fear me exceedingly if I were to treat you to venison of my

own killing, in a robber's cave?" "I fear I should like the adventure, though certainly not the companion," Clarence answered with simple honesty; but he looked incredulous while he said it. He then expressed his anxiety to learn how the affray had terminated between the rival shepherds, and his curiosity to know what magic had been employed to quell their fury so suddenly.

"The magic of authority;" answered his new acquaintance. "Don't you think a chief of banditti may be as good at compelling obedience as Valois himself? One word is enough for the Bearnese; and the boors of Spain must leave off fighting for want of adversaries. But here comes de Molleville; he will tell us what mischief has been done."

De Molleville, the only man of ripe age in the party of hunters, now approached; and, checked in his mode of address by a sign from Clarence's companion, briefly stated that he had found

the wounded mountaineer; that he was not dangerously hurt, though much cut about the body; and that the different disputants were dispersed: the Arragonese having been intimidated by the arms of de Molleville's company.

"On, then, to Escalette!" cried the first stranger. Clarence eagerly echoed that word.

"Have you the same objection to the stone walls of a barrack-room, as you showed to the suspicious inside of a cave?" asked his new friend. "Oh! I see it now!" interrupted the impetuous Clarence, "there is to be a war then! you are one of our brave king's officers, — perhaps you belong to his gallant nephew?" "I do belong to the Chevalier Adhemar," was the answer.

"Then do I envy you!" exclaimed Clarence, a passionate sigh bursting out with the words; "I would rather be that noble Adhemar's horse-boy, than first page to the king of France!"

"Indeed!" replied his companion, with an embarrassed glance at de Molleville, and an attempt at indifference.

"And why would you prefer it?" asked de Molleville, advancing a step or two, in spite of the faint stroke with which the younger hunter would have kept him back.

"Why!" echoed Clarence, more impetuously than before, "because he immortalized himself at sixteen, by the courage of a hero; while I —— and because he was the son —"

De Molleville, apprehensive of what might follow, and ably interpreting the change of his master's cheek, hastily whispered something in their young companion's ear.

All Clarence's blood rushed to his face; the blaze of his rivetted eyes, and his instant silence, told the secret of that whisper. A brighter suffusion on the Chevalier's cheek deepened, while he half-stretched out his hand towards his young

admirer; but checking himself again, with something of reserve, which did not now seem arrogance, he drew back, murmuring a few inaudible words.

The inexperienced, and ardent Clarence, whom the Chevalier's first movement had hurried forward to meet it, now retreated also; entreating pardon for his ignorance of his preserver's rank; yet protesting, that he was too likely to forget it, in the enthusiasm with which he thought of him, as the young hero of Metz.

Only four years Clarence Willoughby's senior, Adhemar de Bourbon, though disciplined by the habits of polished courts to conceal his own strong feelings, was acutely alive to such feelings in others; especially when they administered to his ruling passion. He therefore felt, almost to transport, this unsuspicious homage, even while he commanded his looks sufficiently, not to discover his pleasure. He contented

himself with one eloquent glance at his new acquaintance, repeating the invitation to supper; and telling him that he had come to Escalette, to inspect the state of its works, which the king — he meant the king of Navarre, — purposed having extended.

Clarence's happy blush and bow, were received with another speaking eye-flash, — the eye that gave it, immediately withdrawing under the shade of its long, dark lashes, and the whole countenance of the Chevalier settling in dignified composure. As he led the way along the steep ascent that wound up to the gateway of the fortress, Clarence followed; at first in silence, — dizzy silence; — scarcely believing that he could be awake, and actually in company with that Adhemar de Bourbon, whose name had so often made every pulse in his body throb with noble envy. He marvelled how one so young could look and speak with such an air of sedate majesty; he

marvelled more, that even the hero of Metz, circumstanced as he was, could appear so lordly. Adhemar Vicomte de Limoges was, indeed, an acknowledged son of the House of Bourbon; he had been educated in palaces, and served by nobles; — he was permitted to bear one of his father's titles; allowed to reward the services of his friends and followers, with his uncle's favor; he was admired in peace, and distinguished in war; — he was also in the very bud of life, with the character and advantages of full maturity; — but, he was illegitimate!

To Clarence, such a stain seemed most foul indeed; because it affixed disgrace upon the parents of the unfortunate offspring: but the French world considered it singly as it had reference to a man's future fortune. Many were the princes beyond the Alps, who, born like Adhemar, now sat in their father's chair; not a few of the most powerful families also, in France, were sprung from a similar

stock: so that since his father's illustrious kindred chose to acknowledge him, if the young Limoges himself could be insensible to the frailty of his parents, the courtiers of Pau and Paris, thought it no degradation to themselves, to treat him as his uncles intimated, — like the legitimate son of François de Bourbon.

Clarence might have shrunk with hasty prejudice, from so administering to the pride of this wild shoot of royal race, had the latter been merely the Chevalier de Bourbon, Vicomte de Limoges; but distinguished as he was by personal merit, and made known to Clarence by the assistance which saved his life, the misfortune of his birth became sacred in his eyes; and he felt more inclined to lavish respect and service, perhaps, because their source, in this case, could not be mistaken.

When the broadening of their rocky stair-case — for so it might be called, — allowed two persons to walk abreast, the

Chevalier motioned Clarence to his side, and went on conversing with him, while de Molleville, and the other noble hunters who had now joined him, followed in tumultuous spirits, though at a most respectful distance.

Clarence's remarks upon the past events of the slumbering war, and the questions he hazarded respecting the fortification of Escalette, made the Chevalier express surprise that one so remote from the scenes of martial action, should have become such an enthusiast in them, and have made himself so acquainted with the terms and objects of military science. Clarence answered this remark, by an avowal of the avidity with which he had long been in the habit of reading the chronicles of chivalry, and enquiring the great events of his own time: he mentioned the frequent lessons he had received from the old soldier at Lourdes, in the tactics of the last age; and he followed that up, by a hasty summary of his

last conversation with his father. He blushed at his own indiscretion the instant it was committed; but it was not to be recalled. His illustrious companion mused for a moment or two, scanned his proportions while doing this, then abruptly asked his age; repeating, "Just seventeen!" with a tone of surprise; as suddenly adding, "we must know each other better, Willoughby. You must stay at Escalette till I rejoin my uncles in Gascony; — it will be only for a day or two."

Clarence glowed, and hesitated; yet why he hesitated, he knew not; for at Roche Blanc, no one expected his return till the week's hunting should be over. It rested, therefore, solely with himself, how he chose to dispose of that week. A presentiment that two days with the party chance had introduced him to, would spoil his relish for home, was perhaps at the bottom of this hesitation; but the temptation was too powerful to be resisted: he consented.

Having gained their lofty resting-place, the whole party were too tired with a day of climbing precipices and chasing wild deer, for any thing beyond relaxation afterwards. Clarence's survey of the fortifications, and the lecture on them, which his new friend promised, were necessarily deferred till the morrow.

Supper was served in a large stone hall, black with the smoke of wood fires; darkened still more by piles of rusty armour; and deprived of light from without, by the boughs of some ancient cedars, which shot their giant arms athwart the casements.

The casements themselves were much broken, and filled up here and there with fragments of old military attire, to keep out the eager air of the mountains. The huge and numerous doors opening from the hall, were some without fastenings, others without hinges; so that they swung to and fro upon every blast that entered, with monotonous mournfulness,

or suddenly clapped to, with a shock like thunder.

The place itself was dismal enough; and soon, the pealing of the rising wind among the trees and the battlements, the distant howling of wolves, and the nearer hooting of owls, increased its seeming dismalness. But, in fact, these circumstances only gave poignancy to the enjoyment of the joyous party within. Their table smoked with the game the morning's chase had procured; and their chimney blazed with a glorious fire of pine wood and rosemary, which, as it crackled and roared in the huge chimney, scented and lighted the whole apartment. Their very dogs, lying stretched before this genial blaze, added something to the feeling of social pleasure it created. Wines, as sparkling as the wit they heightened, danced in the beechen cups of the hunters; the jest, the song, the laugh went round. Adhemar de Bourbon chose to take off all restraint from his

companions, except that only which his just taste always preserved: that taste known, not a breath was uttered that could sully or shock the pure mind of their inexperienced associate; and he believed himself, therefore, in the very world he had longed for, — the world of joyous spirits, *sans peur et sans reproche.*

There was an unexpected fascination in the careless way these young soldiers, (for they had all made campaigns) talked of dangers and deeds which Clarence had previously heard related with amazement and admiration. The pompous terms in which such incidents were narrated in his favorite histories, and the wondering awe which Godefroi naturally sought to impress upon him, had prepared him for any thing but this gay recklessness of life and commendation. These young men jested at each other's achievements when a military novice would have stumbled over a compliment: every thing was mirthful to them, — every

thing *couleur de rose*. Nothing could be more seducing than this charm of gaiety and good humour. Their varied conversation, alternately taking wing from scenes of frolic to scenes of danger; hovering over each, with all the grace of Parisian refinement, or stooping to seize their subject powerfully, for a moment, only to fly off again on the same volatile pinions of whim and fancy, — took all Clarence captive. His own nature was too joyous, not to be enchanted with the discovery thus made to him, that he might at once be very great and very gay; that even a hero need not look the grimmer for wearing laurels round his brow; that, in short, he might preserve the laughter-loving spirit of youth, amid scenes which would task the manhood of that spirit to its utmost. Many, indeed, were the combined spells which fascinated our youthful hero: — the place itself, the party within it, the novel incidents which had conducted him there, the recollec-

tion of the Chevalier de Bourbon's demeanour on their first meeting, and the gratifying consciousness of its difference now.

That air of proud or noble reserve, which had displeased him in the Chevalier, together with the grave dignity and measured distancing of his address, were changed into fire and freedom. He spoke much, and admirably; taking a wider range of subjects than his companions, and diving deeper than they; displaying a mind as richly imbued, as studiously cultivated; directing his discourse, principally to his new acquaintance; enhancing the attention he paid him, not in truth by slighting others, but by such a seeming oblivion of their presence, as society tolerates only in princes and lovers.

In the clear mirror of Clarence Willoughby's eyes, de Bourbon saw the admiration he was inspiring, and excited still further by their kindling

fixture, became every moment more enchanting.

Although Clarence, in spite of his youth and artlessness, could not help suspecting that his illustrious companion must be roused into this display of himself to a boy like him, more from the wish to be admired, than from the expectation of such sympathy as offers future friendship, he was unable to resist the witchcraft of its effect. He was not the first person that has been bribed out of their discernment, by similar flattery. One better skilled in the world's lore, might have taken alarm at the very circumstance which most subtly effected the conquest of Clarence's heart and head. That air of the master, preserved by de Bourbon even in his freest addresses to his habitual associates, yet waived for him, the intimate of an hour, might have excited apprehensions either of caprice, or ungratefulness, or vanity;—nay, even some suspicion of being played

upon for the purpose of affording amusement hereafter, might have crossed a timid person's imagination, and assisted them in tempering their enthusiasm.

But Clarence was too delicately flattered, for the first ideas to strike him; and too open and generous in his nature to have any conception of the last. He thought he read in Adhemar de Bourbon's occasional looks, — for his language was of a much colder character, — an answering spirit to his own; one, quickly fired by an appearance of adventure, and prompt to like what it had benefited.

So judging, in some degree he was right. The Chevalier de Bourbon was neither cold nor haughty by nature, although the circumstances of his situation made him so often assume the semblance of both, that he was in reality become something like what he seemed. A spurious branch of that House which was considered the head of one party in the state, and the enemy of another,

Adhemar de Bourbon was early exposed to the vicissitude of adulation and mortification. To the contempt of the Catholic faction, his character led him to oppose haughtiness instead of humility: he affected to despise their superstitions, as profoundly as they did his birth: and even when amongst those of the opposite sect and party, whose enthusiasm for the cause Condé and Navarre supported, led them to make a court around their nephew, he preserved a stateliness of manner, which provoked their secret notion of superiority, or checked the freedom of their wills, by an arbitrary tone, only allowable in a legitimate Bourbon.

Adhemar had at first tried to believe, that he considered the accident of his birth as no disgrace; but by degrees it galled him incessantly, and made him alike anxious to receive testimonies of respect and regard from those about him, and as doubtful of such testimonies when

offered. Conscious that he himself — had their situations been exchanged — would have refused such profound respect to them, as they now rendered outwardly to him, he eyed their looks of deference with distrust; and received their professions of personal attachment, with that studied calmness which chills real enthusiasm, while it is intended only to show affected feeling that it does not deceive.

De Bourbon wished to be admired and respected; and never till he heard his own eulogy so rapturously uttered to himself, by a youth who could not know his person, did he believe that he might be studiously sought, without reference to his present or future power of promoting a man's fortune; — nay, idolized for his own merits' sake. This young enthusiast, too, had so lately displayed that intrepidity of spirit which he prized, that it might well be supposed he should like to foster and reward it. There might

be great disproportion in the ripeness of their minds, but there was little in their actual ages; and it required much less discernment than the Chevalier was gifted with, to be certain that in all that dignifies the character of manhood, Clarence Willoughby, were he placed in a situation to expand and exercise it, would soon rank with the noblest. The vividness of all Clarence's impressions, and the frankness with which he avowed them, had nothing of rustic simplicity; they were distinctly the impressions and the ingenuousness of a spirit, too noble and discriminating, to have any false shame about his ignorance on certain subjects, where he could not be informed, unless he had mixed in scenes in which neither his age nor his destiny made it possible for him to have been an actor. It was evident, therefore, that if he lived familiarly with but few persons, those must be of that class which habituates youth to the thoughts and manners of

"gentle blood," and as such, Adhemar de Bourbon felt no apprehension of intangling himself either with an unworthy or an ignoble follower.

Clarence, indeed, displayed himself fully to his new acquaintances. Never till now, had he been in the society of persons of his own sex and age, at all his equals in that genius for awakening conversation, which made him the delight of Roche Blanc: he was therefore hurried on, to keep pace with his present company; and that, solely from eagerness to enjoy. He asked a thousand amusing questions about the camp and the court; about jousts and tournaments; war steeds and armour: listened with insatiable pleasure, to his companion's description of their first feelings, in their first battles; and mixed so much generous remark with the *náiveté* of inexperience, that de Bourbon enjoyed in anticipation, the pride and gratification he promised himself, in accomplishing a mind which

rushed more than half way, to meet the lessons he taught.

A delicate compliment from the Chevalier, upon his manly appearance — (at Clarence's age, and with Clarence's aspirations, such a compliment was inestimable,) — finished his intoxication. Surprised, flattered, delighted with the favorable impression he had evidently made upon the absolute god of his idolatry, was it wonderful that the whole head of an impassioned, inexperienced boy, should be turned; and that by the time he and his party had supped together, and drank rather more Burgundy together than Clarence had ever cared to drink before, he should believe it impossible for him ever to resume the colourless life he thought himself destined to pass at L'étoile?

CHAP. IV.

The next day and the day succeeding that, were spent after the same fashion. Clarence had communicated his own anxiety for the destruction of the shepherd's four-footed enemies, to the Chevalier and his companions; they were therefore up with the day-star; ranging over the suspected haunts of the wolves, and sustaining sundry discomfitures among the slippery or perilous steeps, which Clarence trod with ease and safety.

The unfailing good humour of happy youth, turned these accidents into fresh causes for mirth: they jested on each other's awkwardness; contrasting the cautious step of one, and the wary look of another, after essaying a fall, with the same sprightly gallant's air, when dancing

a measure at court, or when mounting a breach in face of the enemy.

Not one of these young Frenchmen had ever visited the mountainous parts of their country before; and this too was Adhemar de Bourbon's first sight of the lately-acquired Principality of his uncle: he was, therefore, not qualified to acquit himself much better than any of his train; and a mischievous spirit or two amongst them, highly enjoyed his midway plunge into a shallow brook, which the agile Clarence had previously vaulted over, like "feathered Mercury."

Both mornings, however, proved fruitful in spoil as well as merriment: their fowling-pieces ensured the destruction of several wolves, which the ordinary hunting spear could not have reached; and the hunters returned to Escalette, with good-natured pleasure in their hearts, and the mountain air upon their cheeks.

After a morning's fatigue like what has

been described, the young lords, either were, or adroitly feigned to be, in the mood for lounging about the hall, leaving their leader to pursue his own inclinations without dread of observation. They amused themselves within the fort, by feeding the hall-fire into a furnace, or with expedients for keeping the ponderous doors in their places, while Clarence kept his station without, by the side of the Chevalier, who inspected the fortifications, explaining the nature and uses of different works of the same description, to his attentive auditor.

Insensibly the conversation would change its course, quit the mere "thews and sinews" of war, as its deadly instruments may be termed, and dwell upon its spirit. At such times, Clarence found himself more upon an equality with his accomplished companion (for the character of a noble soul is not the work of this world; it is stamped in heaven); and as he talked of honour and glory,

he gave, unawares, some astonishing lessons to the hero of Metz. Alive to the beauty of great sentiments, when spoken from the heart, Adhemar de Bourbon found his own ennobled by collision with those of Clarence; and skilled in appropriating to the uses of the moment, what he studiously collected from the books or conversation of abler minds, he astonished and interested him even more than he had done at first, by a happy choice and management of subjects, which he obviously appeared to think above the flight of his usual associates.

Clarence, perhaps, suspected as much also, in spite of his exceeding relish for the lighter graces of amusing discourse: on every topic, except mirthful ones, his better judgment acknowledged the Chevalier's superiority over the party with him; for he never introduced subjects of gallantry into their occasional *tête-à-tête*, as some of them had done. Clarence

was yet a stranger to the passions connected with beauty; he neither knew love nor vanity, from his own experience: had he talked of Aigline de Venzéles to these gallants, he would have talked of her only with the open fondness of a brother. Indeed, so full were both his head and heart of the stirring images and purposes de Bourbon's society had crowded into them, that any other idea encumbered him.

Clarence's unpractised heart, overflowing with the generous emulation excited by his noble friend, and warm with the recollection that he owed his life to him, poured itself out, unconsciously and artlessly, in a thousand different ways, equally eloquent of admiration and gratitude.

The Chevalier turned not away from such homage. His young worshipper's sincerity he could not doubt; and to him who lived amongst courtiers from the cradle, and whose peculiar character

and situation rendered him as solicitous for personal regard as suspicious of it when professed — to him, this homage was as gratifying as unexpected.

It seemed a pledge to him of wider estimation: it awakened the flattering thought, that multitudes of nameless bosoms might be beating like Clarence's for their unknown hero, and that such might be destined to rally round his standard in a season of political danger, or of ambitious enterprize.

Such a season might not unreasonably be anticipated by a Bourbon: for at this period of their widest splendour in the field, and greatest elevation to power, in the person of their head, they were threatened with total eclipse by the rival House of Lorraine. The Duke de Vendôme's love of ease and pleasure, had early unfitted him for playing the courtier to his cousin and companion Henry Valois, the present sovereign of France. Vendôme's thoughtless neglect of the

young king's favor, had nearly extinguished the affection from which that favor flowed; when his envied acquisition of the principalities of Bearn and Navarre, and his subsequent refusal to exchange them for equal seigniories in France, set the seal to Henry's disgust, and opened a door to the machinations of Vendôme's enemies.

The plea of religion was then pressed into the service of ambition; and the family of Lorraine, increasing in zeal for the Popish doctrines in proportion as that of Bourbon warmed towards those of Calvin, represented them as heretics and malcontents, to whom a Catholic monarch must be an object of secret aversion.

Thus, although the Bourbon princes, as princes of the blood, still appeared at court with the splendour and respect due to their birth, and still kept that distinguished rank in the field which their valour and warlike genius had won, they

were sensible to a variety of private provocations and public slights, originating in the Duke de Guise, and his brother of Lorraine. But, supported by a powerful and increasing party, formed of all in Paris and in the provinces inclined to the new religion, the Bourbons still made successful head against the Duke de Guise's faction; resolute to maintain the post allotted them by honor and conscience, or to perish in the light of their own cloudless reputation.

Such was the situation of his illustrious kindred, when Adhemar de Bourbon made the gratifying discovery of his own estimation in the minds of his contemporaries: it was not surprising, therefore, that he should contemplate its possible advantage to him hereafter with complacency; or that he should feel more kindly inclined than ever to the enthusiastic youth who had first shown him the wide diffusion of his individual fame.

Two enchanting days fled past, and

Clarence was trying to enjoy the third, by forgetting that it was to be the last he should spend in such society, when a circumstance occurred which carried confusion into all his thoughts.

After the supper of this third evening, the Chevalier, tempted by a beautiful moon, and the particular stillness of the air, invited Clarence to walk out with him in front of the fort, that they might observe together the majestic course of the stars, and taste the freshness of early night. Leaving the rest of the party over their wine, they went out upon the rampart.

The night was, indeed, magnificent: mountains, woods, vallies, rivers, were all covered with the same dazzling sheet of silver. Not a leaf stirred in the woods; not a sound ascended from the vallies: every thing was still, except the torrents, thundering with awful and continuous roar, in the deeps below; and above, the planets, whirling on their golden axles through the *vast serene:*

heard in that still hour, and on that solemn night, by the ear of tranced imagination.

The chevalier advanced to the edge of the precipitous rock, and stood there for some moments in thoughtful silence; then turning to his companion, whose rapt look was fixed upon the glorious heavens, he said to him in a subdued voice, as if afraid of being overheard —

"Among scenes like these, Willoughby, you may easily dispense with a companion; but I, who am going back into scenes of frivolity, artifice, deceit, and malignity, shall miss the unsophisticated mind that I have seen here without disguise, and the candid eye that has never yet shrunk from the close reading of mine."

De Bourbon had begun with a serious tone, nearly amounting to sadness: but he changed it suddenly, as if recollecting himself, into one of more sportiveness.

For the first time since their meeting,

the eyes Adhemar de Bourbon spoke of, looked down, and turned away — but it was to conceal the tears, which, in spite of all Clarence's efforts to the contrary, swelled to their very brim. He could not speak — and the agitation which caused his silence, was not possible to be overlooked.

Encouraged by this visible emotion, the chevalier at once asked him, whether, if war broke out again, he should like to serve; as, in that case, he might promote his military views essentially, and have the additional gratification of his society? The answer of Clarence may be imagined; for his sensibility was roused almost to agony, and he caught with eagerness at the first mode of giving it way, without indulging in expressing regret and sorrow.

De Bourbon smilingly bade him be wary ere he promised, unless he really felt as impatient as he professed, for the adventures of a campaign. He then

proceeded to make several minuter enquiries than he had hitherto felt privileged to do, about the English connections of Mr. Willoughby. To these, Clarence could give only imperfect answers, acknowledging that his father's habitual taciturnity, and his own former heedlessness, left him very slightly acquainted with their family history.

At this critical part of their discourse, a person much disordered in dress, like one that had previously ridden hard, appeared, hastily scaling one of the paths leading up the mountain. As he took off his leathern cap to wipe his forehead, the chevalier knew him to be a courier from his uncle; and, challenging him by name, hurried to meet him at the portal.

While de Bourbon stood reading by the light of the moon the dispatch brought by this man, Clarence walked slowly away, his eye now and then caught by the picturesque appearance of the fort — by the broad lights, and deep

shadows of its lofty front; and his attention as often arrested by snatches of the gay catch from within, which was interrupted as often by the bursting laughter of it imperfect singers. The mirthful moods of these young Frenchmen were as agreeable to the lighter part of Clarence's character, as their nobler companion's grave humour was interesting to his better feelings: — to have the power of enjoying both at will, seemed to him the acmè of human happiness; and he was meditating on the possibility of doing this, by inducing his father to take him to Paris, provided the continuance of peace should destroy his hope of seeing the Chevalier de Bourbon on a nobler theatre, when the latter came up, and broke off his reverie.

The letter Adhemar held in his hand was from the Prince de Condé: it told him that the truce of Vauxelles was tottering to its overthrow — that the Pope was loudly demanding assistance

from the monarch of France — that a camp was already forming near Avignon, under the Duke de Guise — and that the army of Coligny was silently collecting again in Picardy. To the camp at Avignon Condé proposed going, previous to the marriage of his brother, the Comte d'Enghien; and he called upon his nephew, therefore, to rejoin him immediately at Nerac, that they might make that interesting visit together, ere they went for Moulins to be present at d'Enghien's nuptials.

Adhemar de Bourbon repeated this with the calmness of a man either familiarized with such stirring news, or prepared for them; and, with the careless freedom of one secure of acquiescence, he invited Clarence to accompany him into Gascony, and thence to Avignon, and thence to Moulins.

The unusual fire with which he anticipated a campaign beyond the Alps; the pleasure he bespoke for himself, in

seeing his new friend's admiration of a camp, and of what he called the first troops in the world; the prospect he held out of jousts and tourneys, in honour of his uncle's marriage with the young and beautiful Duchess d'Estouteville: — the names of Nemours, Roche-sur-yon, Coligny, Andelot, as among the personages likely to grace these nuptials, formed altogether a spell, impossible to resist. Each of these great names were so many war-calls to a spirit emulous of glory: that of Clarence, kindled and blazed. By the time their rapid steps had brought them to the entrance of the fort, he had given his consent to the sudden proposition of the chevalier. There was no time for sending to ask his father's consent: de Bourbon, therefore, agreed to dispatch a messenger to Roche Blanc on the morrow, ere they set out, to say whither Clarence was gone, and with whom. Their next step took them into the hall.

The manner all this intelligence was received by the party there, completed Clarence's delirium. The sparkling wine cup, and the festive song, were alike forgotten: they crowded round the chevalier, to enquire where the campaign was to be made, and by whom conducted: the next moment they set themselves about speculating on the particular objects of enterprize — upon the honors they hoped to win and to wear, with such animated gaiety, as might have induced a calm auditor to believe that each was secretly assured of some preternatural power in his body, to resist wounds and baffle death.

Exhilirated even beyond their usual pitch, the party reseated themselves at table, and drank to the honor of the French arms. Anecdotes of different campaigns were poured in on every side — hair-breadth 'scapes, gallant enterprizes, instances of individual intrepidity or suffering, that alternately thrilled and

froze the blood. These again gave place to traits of heroism, coupled with levity, or with circumstances so ludicrous, that peals of laughter shook the walls of Escalette; forcing Clarence, in spite of some inward perturbation and awe, to consider the threatening preparations they were going to visit, but as the more gorgeous lists of a courtly tournament.

Catching the tone of his company, Clarence reseated himself with them, enjoying their varied discourse, and amusing them with his own; till the midnight watch was set, and the voice of the departing sentinel, wishing his comrades good night, reminded them of the hour. De Bourbon then rose, named the time of morning when they should leave Escalette, and courteously bowing to all, and expressively smiling upon one, quitted the hall.

As the remainder of the company were about to separate, one of them, named Beaurevoir, bent to the ear of

Clarence: "Remember me, in Paradise!" he said. Clarence started at the profane allusion.

Without noticing the sudden change in his countenance, Beaurevoir went on, in the same tone of covert mockery. "The game is in your hand, and you have played admirably as yet; at hap-hazard, though, I guess. Let me tell you, if I held your cards, I should have the charge I want, in less than a week. The Viscomte is very gracious when he pleases; and the person he favors so desperately, may help a poor spendthrift like me, without marring his own fortune; so I say once more, *remember me in Paradise.*"

Clarence now smiled too frankly; thinking, as he did, of friendship, not fortune; and he said something in reply which made too artless a display of his reliance on appearances: yet was it coupled with such generous inclination to do a good-natured action, as might

have disarmed any thing but a hardened scoffer. He shook Beaurevoir cordially by the hand as he did so; then withdrew for the night.

Little did he think that the loud burst of laughter which immediately resounded from the hall as he closed the door, proceeded from this very young man, making merry with his companions over the credulity and simplicity of their new acquaintance!

Though all thought him delightfully agreeable, and some considered him with amiable kindliness, not one of them was able to resist the infectious treachery of their every day companion, but yielded to the temptation of enjoying — at the expence of after self-blame — a few moments convulsive merriment now; while Beaurevoir alternately caricatured the stately chevalier, and the impetuous Clarence, swearing that flattered vanity had hooked the simpleton, as completely as the hero, and offering to take any

bet, that the conceited mountaineer would do or say something, before they got half way to Nerac, which would send him back without his errand.

A second mad-brained, but not cold-hearted jester like himself, took Beaurevoir's bet: the relenting others started from their seats, refusing to laugh any longer at the charming boy who showed himself so sincerely pleased with them all; and the Marquis de Molleville, calling for lights, drily recommended Beaurevoir not to make himself too sure either of young Willoughby's supposed favor or folly.

Meanwhile, intoxicated with what had just been said to him, and with the result of his own previous observations, the unconscious object of this mockery mounted the steep stairs of the fort, and shut himself into his sleeping room in a state of spirits totally unlike all he had ever felt before. It was transport while it lasted; for to his heated imagin-

ation, some commissioned angel seemed visibly opening the gates of glory and felicity before him.

To Clarence, at seventeen, these two distinct ideas were one; he saw nothing *but* glory on the road of life: others might stoop there for the golden apples of profit, or the painted ones of pleasure, he sought only to attain the immortal laurel at its goal.

Quite certain, in his present mood, that Mr. Willoughby could not fail to rejoice at the extraordinary fortune which had at once given his son a preserver, a patron, and a friend; — as sure that he must acknowledge, in such a coincidence, the absolute hand of Providence, Clarence sunk to sleep, after several hours of dizzy anticipations, too delicious and delirious to deserve the name of reflection.

He dreamt, and dreamt of a deceased person, whose remembrance had certainly not once occurred to him during his short sojourn at Escalette: it was the

late Hugonot teacher of Roche Blanc, whose pious ministry he had always attended with his father. By one of those ordinary, yet most inscrutable effects of dreaming, which is familiar to us all, the spirit which, waking, had not prompted a single objection to its own wishes, nor ever imagined they could be censurable, now took the character of another's mind; and precisely in such powerful language as the rigid Calvinist would have uttered, pointed out a parent's absolute authority over a son so young as Clarence. It suggested the various accidents which might combine to aggravate his fault of self-will, by making it the origin of some signal mischief. The carelessness of de Bourbon's messenger might leave his father and friends in ignorance of his safety; once at the camp, if the enemy attacked it, he might find it impossible to resist a second temptation — that of mixing in a battle. Some disaster might thus befal him; he

might perish in disobedience, and so bring his father with sorrow to the grave!

With the last words thrilling in his ear, Clarence started out of his dream. In the disorder of his senses, he almost expected to see the buried minister himself standing by his bed-side; but there was nothing visible in the glooming of dawn, except the dusky walls, and high oaken bench of his rude chamber. Every pulse in his body throbbed with the perturbation of one familiar with superstitious stories, and not incredulous of them: the agitation, however, passed off by degrees; and the counsel given to him in his sleep then possessed him wholly.

That delirium of rash confidence with which he had closed his eyes at night, at once vanished; happy would it have been, he thought, could his wishes have subsided with it; but they were as keenly importunate as ever. He repeated to himself the vision's arguments against

his accompanying even the nephew of the King of Navarre on so short an acquaintance, without having previously consulted his father, and received his permission. He added to them several minor ones, suggested by his own awakened feelings of filial affection and gratitude; then clinging to his paramount desire, he opposed to these arguments all that the sophistry of a passion not conscious of evil aim might urge in favor of his seizing the present moment for its gratification.

Never was young heart more sorely assaulted. The fear of losing an opportunity which never might occur again, and the dread of securing it by a culpable neglect of duty, alarmed his virtuous, yet self-indulging nature. Inclination urged that Mr. Willoughby could have no rational objection to a military life for a son whose character could not long brook existence without an object of honorable pursuit; that he must per-

ceive the amazing advantages of that son's commencing a martial career under the auspices of Condé, the hero of the French Protestants, and the friend of those in England; and that, consequently, if Clarence would only take courage to proceed in his late purposes, once at the camp his father might easily be induced to let him remain there, both from complaisance to his son's preserver, and from his own habitual sacrifices to the inclinations of that darling boy.

Some good angel must have conducted Clarence's reasonings to this point, for here he stopped, his heart swelling with honest shame at his own selfishness. It was impossible for him not to spurn the temptation, when once seen, of thus ensnaring an indulgent parent's consent: and after wrestling a little longer with the natural rebellion of a young heart, which, unconvinced of wrong in its wishes, feels it hard to submit them to the mere command of duty, he deter-

mined to give up Nerac and the camp, and the jousting at Moulins, and return to L'étoile.

If maturity may be said to commence whenever youth makes its first sacrifice of passion to principle, Clarence Willoughby must no longer be considered as a boy: he had just surrendered his strongest wish and dearest hopes on the altar of filial obedience.

As if afraid of his own resolution, the moment it was made Clarence became impatient to communicate it; longing with distempered eagerness for the sound of the first bugle, which was to be the signal for the party assembling in the hall below.

When the heavy spring mists broke away from the stupendous pile of mountains which Clarence had seen the night before in such sublime repose, and contemplated with such intense admiration by the side of Adhemar — as their majestic forms rose successively upon his

sight, he started and sighed, for the bugle sounded. He looked from the loop-hole of his sleeping room, and saw the inferior retinue of the Chevalier already prepared for their journey, walking to and fro in the court of guard. The Chevalier himself was standing on one of the bastions, conversing with the subaltern officer who was to be left behind in charge of the works.

Scarcely conscious how he got there, Clarence was at his side in a few moments. After the usual morning's salutation, he hurried out the change which had taken place in his purpose during the night; and painfully desirous of testifying his gratitude for life preserved, and friendship offered, yet unwisely ashamed of showing the extent of his regrets, he confessed that a dream had influenced him, not caprice; and did not add to this confession as frank an avowal of the struggle it had caused him.

He spoke with such agitated preci-

pitancy, that Adhemar de Bourbon was at some loss to understand what he meant to say; but on his mentioning a dream, he deemed it a frivolous attempt to excuse either a whimsical or impertinent repentance of a rash engagement; or else the effect of tutoring by some one of his party, to play upon their noble companion's evident liking, and gain some purpose. Easily stung by such thoughts, and easily made to doubt; indignant, too, at such slighting of his inclination for him, which the Chevalier had unguardedly shown to Clarence on the preceding night, he looked steadfastly at him for a moment or two, then said with composure, "I have been told that the hottest blood soonest cools;" and walking gravely away, resumed his discourse with the engineer.

Clarence's inflammable blood blazed up at this contemptuous coldness: the next instant it sunk. It was the preserver of his life that spoke; the hero

to whom he had, indeed, poured forth almost a lover's adoration during the last two days! Experience would have added, it was one of royal race, who had offered kindness and favor to an unknown inferior, by whom they were both slighted.

Clarence hastily followed the Chevalier, with the intention of explaining himself better; but the slighting glance which the other just directed to him, and then averted on his approach, checked the impulse. He drew back, pride and resentment swelling in his heart. Some of the party from within now joined them; and, by the instant deference of their manner when addressing the Chevalier, reminded Clarence more forcibly than before of the rank and privileges of the person he was treating with apparent caprice.

Adhemar de Bourbon was rarely the equal of his greatest intimates, except in the social hall and manly chase: in

the camp, he was the commander — at the court, the prince. Piqued, and somewhat disgusted, with his favorite of the last few days, he now resumed that demeanor which at first characterised him. His air was chilling and haughty; his words, few and reserved: and whenever he vouchsafed to turn his face towards Clarence, it was full of proudly distancing expression.

Upon de Molleville's enquiring whether his lordship chose breakfast to be served, the Chevalier declined the meal; ordering his people to prepare for immediate departure: then, as if suddenly recollecting a trifle he had before forgotten, he mentioned Mr. Willoughby's change of plan; desiring that such of his people as were left behind, should be at the young gentleman's orders for escort or service.

Happily for Clarence, the mischief-loving Beaurevoir was not present, or his pointed glance might have stung him

into phrenzy: as it was, the aghast look of de Molleville, and the immediate gravity of the others, gave him mortification enough.

While he marked the cold and haughty air with which the Chevalier walked forwards, and as he met the enquiring glances of those around, his looks grew cold and haughty too; but his coldness and haughtiness were but the assumption of inexperienced youth, distrusting its best impulses, and condescending to copy what it falsely imagined wiser and better than itself.

Believing his insulted feeling braced into iron strength by a sense of injustice, he stood fixed where the Chevalier had left him, until the last of the train reached the hall entrance, and its door closed. Then Clarence felt all that he had forfeited he knew not how; all that he might have retained, could he so far have mastered his quick sensibility as to have disregarded the Chevalier's first

show of displeasure, and have repeated his regrets, his wishes — at least his gratitude — in fuller terms than his embarrassed thoughts permitted at the instant.

Strange to say, Clarence, who would have thought himself disgraced had he not endeavoured to think of death with indifference, now thought of his life saved, with an enthusiasm which made him believe no injury ought to cancel the vast debt.

The recollection of many a long past reverie about this very Adhemar de Bourbon, when the idea of the latter was like a pageant in the clouds; the touching remembrance of their last walk together, swelled in his heart with the force of a yet stronger passion than admiration; and maddened to think they should part in misunderstanding — that the splendid vision he had been gazing on with such transport should thus pass away suddenly, and for ever, he

actually walked to weep, unobserved, on another quarter of the terraced rock.

As he struggled there between choaking tears and proud self-contempt, his better feelings gained the ascendancy, and he began to see that Adhemar de Bourbon, be his rank what it might, had a claim on him for perfect candour. After the favor he had shown him before his usual associates, and the more touching interest he had condescended to avow in private, the Chevalier had an obvious right to a distinct explanation of the laudable motive which influenced Clarence to appear changeable; and if the latter, in consequence of hurried feelings, had explained himself imperfectly, or if de Bourbon, from an over nice sensibility, had taken offence too quickly, still it was incumbent on Clarence to endure a little mortification, for the sake of making his rectitude of intention, and grateful affection, apparent. It was quite possible, he saw, to yield

obedience to filial duty, without either outraging kindness, or compromising his own independent spirit.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, the lucky re-appearance of the person in question, alone and evidently come out again merely to make some forgotten observation upon the rock, decided his fluctuating purpose. With habitual eagerness, Clarence sprang over several heaps of materials for the new works, which lay between him and the Chevalier, and reached him ere the latter was aware of his approach.

Clarence was half on his knee, with the Chevalier's hand at his lip, before he was conscious of the action. His face was crimson with emotion; and the hot tears that were ready to start afresh from his eyes, contributed to choke the only word, that of farewell, which he could attempt to utter.

"Is this to the Bourbon? or to the friend that wished to be?" asked Adhe-

mar, a ray of returning confidence enlightening his darkened aspect.

"To the preserver of my useless life!" Clarence answered impetuously; "to that gallant soldier whom I would have followed gladly through the world, even if he had not preserved my life, — if he would have let me, and I been my own master to do so."

"And is a dream, your master?" asked de Bourbon, disdainfully.

Every feature in Clarence's face seemed to flash at this question; but re-recovering himself with admirable quickness, he went on to explain his feelings, and motives, and intentions.

Falsehood may succeed in imposing upon us for truth; but truth when it chooses to vindicate itself, never can be mistaken for falsehood. Adhemar de Bourbon saw in Clarence Willoughby's anxiously-fixed and speaking eyes, a corroboration of all he said with his lips. He became convinced that even a head-

strong boy may be self-withheld from his strongest desires, by an early principle of duty; that no designing person had been prompting him to insolence; that, in short, he might still believe Willoughby's enthusiasm for him, compatible with his altered conduct.

He then yielded his hand to Clarence's ardent pressure, saying, "Well! follow me to Nerac, if you are permitted. I will wait two days for you: — on the third I am gone. Be sure of my pleasure at seeing you again, whenever you present yourself; yet do not hastily think it strange, if I appear among sycophants and scoffers without hearts, as if I had none myself. Farewell! Farewell. I hear some one." He motioned for Clarence to leave him, evidently afraid of being discovered in this unguarded moment; and Clarence, aware of what he meant, though invulnerable to the ridicule the Chevalier stood in awe of, started on his feet, and disappeared.

CHAP. V.

When Clarence reached L'étoile, he found his father alone, taking his forenoon walk under the shade of its beautiful trees; stopping at intervals to admire the wild flowers which sprung up in profusion among their roots; then resuming those thoughts of other days which his son's appearance broke off completely.

After an exchange of affectionate greeting, Mr. Willoughby, as usual, enquired the success of the latter's excursion. Clarence poured out in reply, the whole story of his adventure with Adhemar de Bourbon; frankly confessing not only the inconsiderate promise he had made and retracted, but the hope he cherished that his father would yet allow him to fulfil it. With his customary

eagerness, an eagerness at variance with good policy, he added to this, the expression of a bolder hope, — that of being allowed finally to accept the Chevalier's offers of favor and assistance in his own distinguished profession.

Mr. Willoughby had listened while Clarence spoke, with more than his ordinary show of attention and interest; merely ejaculating, however, a thanksgiving at the account of his son's escape from the knife of the Spanish shepherd; but at the conclusion of his history, he put his hand once or twice to his forehead, confessing himself at a loss to decide how he ought to answer the request coupled with it.

"I foresee what it will lead to, Clarence;" he said, with an air of perplexity, "and if I knew what would be the best for you, believe me no selfish desires of mine should stand in the way a moment. God knows, — if we are ever to return to our country, — if a

child of Philip and Mary's is to reign; — these de Bourbons are indeed the sheet-anchor of the exiled Protestants here; — in truth I know not what to say! Leave me a while, to think it all over by myself."

Mr. Willoughby motioned his son away, as he spoke; and Clarence, disregarding the flight of smooth steps which conducted from the terraced grove where his father was walking, leaped down at once into the wilder part of those natural gardens, where he continued standing, too anxious for movement of any sort, until the voice of his father recalled him.

The result of Mr. Willoughby's reflections was acquiescence; and aware of the necessity as well as propriety of making acquaintance with Clarence's noble preserver, and of so estimating the seriousness of his intentions, he declared his purpose of accompanying his son to Nerac.

Clarence was nearly overcome with

glad surprise and gratitude; he kissed his father's hand again and again, but most miraculously checked himself just as he was going to ask whether consent to make a campaign under the Bourbon princes, provided war were declared, was coupled with this permission to visit the camp. Little inclined, however, to dally with good of any kind, the enraptured youth seized the granted boon, venturing to suggest that if his father meant to show the extent of his gratitude to the preserver of his son's life, they would lose as little time as possible in setting forward for Gascony.

The suggestion was too just not to operate upon Mr. Willoughby. Having in view, merely the duty of personally acknowledging his great obligation to the Chevalier, and accepting his further kindness of taking Clarence to the camp and adding him to the noble company assembling at Moulins, he required few preparations for his own journey, and

not a great many for the longer one destined for his son. A tolerably well-filled purse, given to that son, would, Mr. Willoughby knew, supply every deficiency.

While he returned into the house, therefore, to arrange certain matters with his domestics, Clarence sprang over bushes and hanging banks, to get by a shorter road to Roche Blanc. The happiness of his young heart was incomplete till he had shared it with Aigline de Venzèles. By the most agreeable chance, he found her alone, and at her needle. With Aigline, Clarence gave uncontrolled way to all those feelings of extravagant expectation, enthusiastic gratitude, and violent prepossession, which had Adhemar de Bourbon for their object; he enjoyed her astonishment, her delight, her sympathy. Aigline did indeed participate in every one of his hopes; even in that, which was grounded upon the probable termination of peace. Like him, as yet

she knew only "the pomp and circumstance of war," in the descriptions of their favorite histories; as yet, she thought only of the exalted virtues which the writers of those histories reported as belonging invariably to the character of a true chevalier, whether friend or enemy. The difference between glory and obscurity was, therefore, infinite in her eye; and of death she dreamt not.

Does the young heart, indeed, ever think of death as likely to strike the dear object it beholds in strength, beauty, and activity? Does it believe such misery possible, while all its pulses are throbbing with hope and joy? No: — we learn fear, only after we have learned to suffer.

Aigline, consequently as gay and glad as Clarence himself, rather stimulated than damped his sanguine spirits. She never looked forward to any thing for herself, beyond the life of Roche Blanc, and she was satisfied to abide it, so long as she had another heart to feel with, in

the breast of her dear Clarence, with which she might go forth into the world of wonders and of enterprize. Enjoying his present rapture, anticipating her own future delight when he should come back and tell her all that he had seen and had felt, — after a long and animated conversation, she returned his affectionate leave-taking, with the same pure ardour as his own; and coupling a smile with her parting benediction, saw his volant figure disappear among the trees of L'étoile, without marring her sympathy with his happiness, by a single tear.

Early the ensuing morning, Mr. Willoughby and his son, attended by a couple of servants nearly as well mounted as themselves, set off for Nerac.

As they rode along, they naturally conversed more upon the object of their journey, than upon the beautiful country over which they were passing. The climate softened into a balminess like the breath of an infant; the mountains

of Bearn sunk, and the plains of Gascony opened before them under a golden sky, almost unnoticed. The father was absorbed in thought and anxiety; the son was throbbing with hope and expectation. The former was just rousing from a peaceful trance of years, and beginning to look upon the probable period of mental exertion, — perhaps of mental suffering, which was now commencing. Hitherto Mr. Willoughby had contented himself with thinking the stream of events, if he waited patiently for it, would drift him towards certain objects without any peculiar effort of his own! He forgot that every year was hurrying his son on to manhood, and that it would soon become a father's duty, therefore, to rise from the couch of oblivious comfort, and bestir himself for that son's honor and fortune.

With many a serious consideration of those vital objects, was mixed something of sadness at the prospect of separation

from his son. Short as he hoped it would prove, still it was a separation, and it was for the first time; and, in all probability, it would lead to a much longer. Full of such reflections, he was pensive and abstracted; while Clarence, who had begun his journey in high spirits, insensibly became silent and thoughtful also; voluntarily resigning this tempting opportunity for promoting his other wishes, out of tenderness for his father's evident trouble of spirit. Little did he guess all that saddened and perplexed that too-timid, too-passive parent!

On reaching their place of destination, the travellers had the satisfaction of finding that the Prince de Condé and his nephew were still there.

Nerac was one of the many delicious residences enjoyed by Anthony of Navarre in right of his wife, that Jeanne d'Albret, afterwards so illustrious as his widow, and the mother of Henri Quatre. The court being then at Pau, it was at

this moment appropriated to the use of the Prince de Condé, who was come thither to concert measures with his royal brother in case of a new war with Spain, for the defence of such of his dominions lying between the Garonne and the Pyrenees, as the rapacity of Philip yet left to him.

In this princely chateau, not only the court of Anthony, but the train of both his brothers might have been accommodated with equal splendour and conveniency; so that Mr. Willoughby and his son, upon enquiring at the great gates for the Vicomte de Limoges, were not surprised at being directed round to another entrance, to ask there for the apartment of Monsieur le Vicomte. Upon enquiring at this quarter of the palace, they were immediately admitted into a succession of open courts, embellished like gardens with stately trees, shrubs, statues, and fountains. These again led to a superb side-entrance,

sufficiently noble for the absolute front of a less splendid edifice; thence into a hall lined with the marbles of Italy, from which ascended a lofty staircase, lost, after its first stage, in a labyrinth of gilded corridors and painted saloons. Every thing within and without proclaimed the residence of the graceful, but voluptuous Anthony.

Into one of the smaller saloons, our travellers were conducted by a feathered page, and left to breathe, while their conductor went to announce them to his lord.

Upon this person's departure, Mr. Willoughby walked up to a window, and mechanically fixed his eyes upon the far stretching gardens below; beautiful indeed they were, as the fabled ones of Armida. Clarence, meanwhile, gazed round him in unadmiring astonishment; impressed, nevertheless, with an uneasy sentiment of inequality with the person to whom all this splendor was now ap-

appropriated, and conscious of a manly preference for the stone walls and ruder benches of Escalette.

In these gorgeous chambers, the Chevalier suffered them to wait much longer than either he or they secretly relished; simply, because the information of their arrival was given him in presence of some who had been of his hunting party in Bearn.

Conscious to the infirmity of his nature, and jealous of that infirmity being discovered, the Chevalier was so continually upon his guard against this dreaded evil, that he often betrayed himself by the very excess of affected indifference. As often, did he stifle really good impulses, from the fear that he might be supposed so to court popularity, and silence contemptible derision.

Such weakness, or rather cowardliness of mind, suited ill with the intrepidity of nerve with which he affronted every species of personal danger. It was the

very reverse of Clarence Willoughby's characteristic frankness and fearlessness: and could the latter have discerned it through that mixture of coldness and fire which struck and puzzled and interested him in the Chevalier, he would perhaps have turned back with disdain even on the very threshold of their acquaintance. As it was, without giving any particular meaning to the Chevalier's delay, he waited with kindly impatience for his appearance. When the latter did enter, the sun-break look with which Clarence hastened to meet him, brought their most interesting expression into the eyes his sought with such intelligible pleasure.

Adhemar de Bourbon extended his hand to the son, though he merely inclined his head to the father; but as his rapid glance took in the figure and observed the returned obiesance of Mr. Willoughby, he saw in a moment that the latter had been used to the ceremo-

nials of a court; as such, his own manner became more princely, and he checked that show of extreme gladness with which he would otherwise have greeted a simple mountain-acquaintance.

Mr. Willoughby's gratitude for the timely succour of his son in an hour of danger, was more touching than diffuse; he then acknowledged his sense of the great benefits which must result to that son, from the privilege, which he courteously accepted, of visiting the camp and the Chateau de Moulins, in the train of the Bourbon princes.

Adhemar de Bourbon received this address with a graciousness duly tempered with dignity; avowing the prepossession he had conceived for his young companion at sight of such generous rashness in one so young; not daring to give even its allowable share to that enthusiastic admiration of himself, which bore its full proportion in fixing his fleeting fancy for a stranger.

Thus, while his animated looks promised and courted future friendship with the son, the Chevalier's lips only echoed the terms of *favor, protection, encouragement,* as they were uttered by the father.

Mr. Willoughby was not a piercing observer, nor, as has been remarked, a very deep thinker; but parental anxiety had roused his faculties to their utmost upon this occasion, and helped him to notice the great difference between the language of the Chevalier's countenance and that of his lips. It was a disagreement rarely seen in persons of illustrious birth; by whom peculiar ardour or interest in their mode of address to inferiors, is rather affected when their looks do not express either, than cold reserve when their feelings are really touched.

Mr. Willoughby having no key to this peculiarity in the Chevalier, hailed it as a certain token of his son's security with him; as a pledge that de Bourbon meant his actions to outrun his professions.

Having asked a few necessary questions about the distance of the camp, the period fixed on for the marriage of the Comte d'Enghien, Mr. Willoughby respectfully enquired whether he might solicit the honor of a short interview with the Prince de Condé himself, adding, with a complimentary smile, that he could not trust an only son solely in the hands of a young hero who was known to love glory so passionately as to have stolen it.

Adhemar de Bourbon's dark complexion glowed at this well-timed allusion, and, smiling too, he said with the embarrassment of extreme gratification, "But you will be pleased to remember who profited by that mad boy's temerity."

Remembering, indeed, that both the elder princes had taken advantage of their nephew's theft at Metz, Mr. Willoughby bowed, acknowledging that the Bourbon blood did not grow cooler for flowing longer in the veins of its in-

heritors; yet still requesting leave to bespeak the Prince de Condé's indulgence to his feelings as a parent and a man of peace.

The Chevalier then confessed that he had made his uncles acquainted both with the circumstances which introduced him to Clarence, and with his further invitations to him; that as Condé had desired to see this new acquaintance, should he present himself at Nerac, de Bourbon could have no hesitation in sending to ask him to receive Mr. Willoughby.

The favor solicited, was promptly granted. Condé, open as day, and equally conscious of high birth, as of high consideration, made not a moment's difficulty of admitting a respectable individual; and Mr. Willoughby was quickly conducted into his presence.

No sooner were the Chevalier and Clarence left to themselves, than both gave way to those feelings peculiar to

each, which a third person's presence had restrained. Clarence was all eagerness to repeat what he had suffered at Escalette, when he believed himself misunderstood by his noble entertainer; and the Chevalier was as willing to hear again and again, in the ardent language of truth and inexperience, the enthusiastic admiration of his new acquaintance.

Like the proud beauty who indemnifies by her smiles in private the lover whom in public she outrages by her scorn, Adhemar, flattered and touched by the promptitude with which Clarence had followed him, at once laid aside that air of dignified restraint which he had deemed it proper to wear before Mr. Willoughby, and became all that he was in their confidential rambles among the Pyrenees.

This seeming, nay indeed actual abandonment of the heart, effaced the little that remained of the uneasy impression left by Adhemar's haughty irritability on

the last morning of their meeting there, and quickened Clarence's longing for permission to attach himself more intimately to his fortunes.

After a short interval, the page who had led Mr. Willoughby into the Prince de Condé's presence, returned to say that the prince requested the Chevalier would meet him in the tennis-court, while the young Englishman went to rejoin his father. Both orders were instantly obeyed. The two young men walked together through a long range of apartments, and a magnificent picture-gallery, when they separated; the Chevalier turning down a flight of steps that terminated in an open portico leading into one of the courts, and Clarence following his conductor through seemingly-endless saloons and corridors, to the opposite wing of this noble residence.

As he passed along, under canopies of velvet, among gilded pillars and hangings of silk, (for he was traversing the state

apartments) he felt with some surprise, how little such things appeared to strike him. Indeed, could he have had his choice, he would have preferred the warrior-hall of Escalette with its fire of mountain fuel, its homely board, and the joyous party around it, to the very same party in this treasure-house of splendour with all the delicacies of the world before them.

There was a manly hardihood in Clarence's nature, which rejected the gaudy trappings of life: comfort and cleanliness were the only luxuries he asked; and both were always at the command of him who could find a bath in every running stream, a bed under every leafy tree.

Upon entering the first room of this wing, Clarence saw his father, walking up and down alone; he was surprised to remark the traces of recent tears upon his cheeks; and affectionately grasping his hand, he enquired what had distressed him.

Mr. Willoughby cleared his countenance as he replied, "Nothing extraordinary, my dear boy. I have only been hearing a great many kind and sensible arguments from this really-great prince, in favor of a military life for you; and I have seen their good sense; and I have yielded to them."

"And is this all that has changed your looks, my dear father?" exclaimed Clarence, his own looks kindling with inconsiderate joy.

"A soldier's life has its dangers," mildly observed Mr. Willoughby; "and do you think your father could well spare you, Clarence, if——"

"Then I give it up!" exclaimed his son, drawing back, yet looking as though he longed to throw himself on his father's neck, as much in disappointment as contrition. Mr. Willoughby rallied himself again, saying, with a smile, "The prince told me, that fond fathers make not heroes; and that their sons may be saints,

but never martyrs: so I am willing to disprove this assertion if I can. I will allow you to be a soldier, Clarence, and you must make yourself a hero."

Clarence's resistance to this indulgent goodness, was at first as strong as vehement; for he loved his father, and he began to comprehend the extent of the sacrifice he was demanding of him: but Mr. Willoughby's mind was now made up to what he believed would prove unavoidable at last, from his son's character, and the character of the times approaching; and he therefore quietly overruled the other's hasty resignation of what he most wished: declaring, that he now thought the best step he could take would be this, of securing for him the friendly patronage of the Bourbon princes.

Mr. Willoughby then proceeded more distinctly to state, that the Prince de Condé had engaged to receive Clarence into his own regiment, should war have actually commenced ere their return

from Provence, and the young man himself be still desirous of entering the service: and that, in such a case, the prince would himself take care that his nephew's *eléve* should not be indiscreetly placed in situations of more than ordinary risk, before he had learned the duty and the mode of protecting his own safety.

"And now, God bless you, my dear boy!" said Mr. Willoughby, striving at a tone merely affectionate. "You know that your father is not given to lectures; so the good principles you have learned already must take care of you in the camp, and at the court: however, I will pray for you now and then at L'étoile, and think of you as seldom as possible." This last attempt at a smile was on the point of being disgraced by tears; but not allowing them time to flow, he pressed his son strongly against his heart, and precipitately retired.

Clarence was astonished at his own

passion of grief, the instant the door had closed upon his father. Wholly vanquished by that father's kindness, goodness, and simplicity of expression, he would have run after him to express this, to pray him to cherish health and cheerfulness for his son's sake, and to charge him with a message to Aigline, intreating her to supply his place at L'étoile whenever her parents would spare her; but overpowered by the excess and suddenness of his emotion, (so little did Clarence study his own sensibility,) and fearful of being met in such a disordered state by any other person, he gave up the intention, remaining where he was till his extreme agitation subsided, and the re-appearance of the Chevalier called upon him for exertion.

The Chevalier, who had ordered his people to apprize him when Mr. Willoughby departed, came for his protogé, whom he now wished to present to his

uncles. Without appearing to notice Clarence's disorder of feelings, otherwise than by a greater expression of sensibility in his own fine eyes, Adhemar de Bourbon led him at once to the tennis court.

There, amongst several others just released from the same manly diversion, were the Princes d'Enghien and Condé, half undressed; their heads and throats bare, their whole persons heated with violent exercise, and somewhat soiled by the dust of the court. In the ardor of their game, neither of them attended to their nephew's voice, otherwise than by a hasty nod, till they had played their first set; after which the youngest of the princes, (that Condé so illustrious then, so much greater afterwards,) came up to the young Englishman in the Dedans, shook him by the hand, said a few amiable words about his country, his father, and the favor his countenance bespoke for him; then, without waiting reply, ran back with all the eagerness of a

schoolboy to resume the spirit of his play.

While the Chevalier stood looking on with Clarence, explaining to him the nature of the game, and the chances of the players, the latter was considering, with pleased surprise, the youthful manners and appearance of both the princes. Till now, he had falsely doubled the number of their years, by those of their renown; and he had to learn, therefore, that neither of them were thirty. Condé's vivacious fire of countenance, joined to the smallness and remarkable activity of his figure, made him appear full as young as his nephew; and the Comte d'Enghien, though taller than his brother, was so much slenderer, and of so smiling an aspect, that he, too, appeared nearly as young as Adhemar. The trio might, indeed, have passed for brothers: but to Clarence's partial and unpractised eye, it seemed that if Condé had more the look of a Warrior, and

d'Enghien that of *un homme distingué*, his preserver had the air of the Prince in greater perfection.

Amongst the groupes in the tennis court, Clarence soon distinguished his different acquaintances of Escalette. At first he was surprised that none of them came forward to notice him; but a little longer observation of all around, taught him his first lesson in court etiquette. During an instant of solitariness, Beaurevoir came up to express his surprise and pleasure at sight of him, but quenched a mocking smile, and respectfully fell back, on the return of the Chevalier to his former station. Clarence's quick mind perceived immediately what was the usage on such occasions; and in his turn he profited by it.

When the princes were thoroughly tired, a racket was put into Clarence's hand, and he was invited, by twenty different voices at once, to take a lesson

in the game he professed himself so pleased with. He did not shrink from the challenge; but no one flattered him except Beaurevoir, who prophesied he would prove a miracle. Clarence's thoughts, in spite of himself, were perpetually following his father, uneasy about his own conduct, suspecting it had been selfish; and, therefore, though he struck the tennis ball with force, he certainly never did it with precision. Beaurevoir, however, continued lauding his performance to the skies in an under tone; half choaking himself and those he muttered to with excessive laughter, while he directed their attention to those *coups de maître*, as he termed blows which never sent the ball they struck where it ought to have gone to.

Emboldened by his own successful impertinence, the jester went on so much less cautiously than at first, that he was overheard by Clarence himself. The latter, restrained by the presence

they were both in, heard him for some time only with a heightening colour; till at length, unable to master his indignation, he turned suddenly round, saying, "Monsieur Beaurevoir, I will save you the trouble of trying your experiment further, by telling you, that I can stand mockery exactly as long as you have been trying it on me: — *not one instant longer.*"

The stern and steadfast look he gave Beaurevoir as he concluded, might not, perhaps, have had its right effect, had not the Prince de Condé himself, who had been watching the mettle of the young Englishman with curious interest, called out, in a mixed tone of jocularity and command, "That ball hit, however! And now, Beaurevoir, I think you must acknowledge this gallant boy has made himself free for life of your mischievous wit."

Beaurevoir bowed; laughed out a compliment to Clarence, by way of sub-

stitute for serious apology; and, completely mortified by the animated bravos of his companions, crowding round the object of his jests, left the court.

To tennis succeeded fencing, and other playful exercises of the sword and the manêge; to these, supper in Adhemar de Bourbon's apartments; but not to supper, rest. Condé himself, after lightly rallying his brother upon his impatience to be with his affianced bride, suddenly proposed shortening his time of penance, by setting off for the camp at Avignon that night, instead of going to bed.

The proposal was rapturously received; and before Clarence had half recovered from the agreeable hurry of spirits into which the proposal, and its hasty preparation, in consequence, had caused him, he found himself in the company of the princes, on the road to Provence.

The whole party rode as hard and as desperately through the night, as though their object were to save the state at the

cost of their necks: yet they rode in such tumultuous spirits, that every traveller they encountered must have set them down for a set of gallants on their way to a carnival.

The mad spirits of Condé created an infinity of incidental adventures, as the troop gallopped over ordinary obstacles without heed or precaution; yet never did he do or say any thing that misbecame his quality, nor ever drew his entertainment from mischief done to others.

No one was half so frank and gay as this amiable prince; and not even Beaurevoir himself could excel the piquant railleries of the more elegant d'Enghien. Adhemar de Bourbon evidently enjoyed the vivacity of his uncles, and encouraged the occasional flashes hazarded by Clarence: but his spirit was more sedately tempered than theirs; and reserving to himself the certain pleasure of predominating, in a calmer hour, over their

ascendant in this, he suffered his young idolator to forget, in giddy merriment, the loftier objects of honour and danger, which occupied him exclusively.

It must be owned that, during this festive journey, the animated Clarence, to whom every thing was new — every thing delightful, and to whose young spirits air and exercise were at any time sufficient fuel, forgot to grieve about his father: he thought only of what he should have to entertain him with when they should meet again; and for himself, he believed that after-life could never offer him such another period of enjoyment as the present.

Perhaps Clarence was right. After-life, if it might bestow delights of a higher nature, was never likely to give them so unalloyed by regret and apprehension.

The scenes immediately following this expedition, were still to Clarence like those of some wondrous vision; such as his heated imagination had often fancied,

while he lay stretched along the sunny brink of the Gave, resting himself in seeming idleness, after a day's excessive exercise, or a morning of stubborn study.

From the sweet groves of dear L'etoile, and the beautiful meadows of Roche Blanc, he was first transported into a princely chateau, stretching its suits of pillared entrances, painted chambers, gardens and parks, over such an extent of ground as might have formed the site of many a village. He was then removed to a camp where war-carriages, war-steeds, and mailed multitudes thronged streets of tents, and groves of "serried spears;" where the din of trumpets, the trampling of horses, the rude revelry or coarser discord of a numerous soldiery, were mixed with the clang of armourers "closing rivets up." He was thus taken suddenly from the sight of a few dear familiar faces, into a crowd of unknown princes and peers, whose names he had been wont to hear like those of

another and a higher world. The stir, the business, the careless good fellowship of all these different individuals, the rousing speculation upon their future movements and future fate which formed their frequent themes of discourse, were too attractive to such a character as that of Clarence, not to fascinate him completely; he came away, after a visit of two days, more passionate in his admiration of a soldier's life than ever: he had not staid long enough to see that enchanted mask drop, with which man has contrived to cover the hideous features of war.

CHAP. VI.

From Provence a shorter road than that through Bearn, led direct to the Bourbonois. Thither the Prince de Condé repaired for the purpose of superintending preparations for the reception of his brother after his nuptials; while d'Enghien himself, winged by love and joy, flew to Estonteville to claim his bride, and lead her in triumph from her home to that of his father, the Chateau de Moulins.

This venerable mansion, long associated in Clarence's mind with memorials of the chivalric ages, was consequently an object of great interest to him. He ran through its tapestried chambers, traversed its twilight passages, contemplated its bannered hall, and mused by the side

of its deep moat, with a feeling nearly amounting to awe. The great and the good, of many a century, seemed then to rise before him; not only such as had borne the princely name of Bourbon, but all who, in those romantic ages, had, like them, courted danger and achieved glory.

With the MS. of Godefroi's ancestor in his memory, Clarence compared its rude paintings with better portraits of the august personages they were intended to represent; and with the features of the Gothic hall itself. It was transport to him, to seat himself in the very chair which the good Duke Louis was known to have occupied at the banquet; — and greater transport, to find that, after some efforts, he could warm with his own fire, many of the thoughtless ones who ridiculed such enthusiasm, merely from ignorance of the remote events and characters by which it was excited.

This knowledge of the Bourbon history, and the vivacity with which he

repeated its most striking passages, to these young men, were additional merits in the eyes of Adhemar; he took pleasure in making him completely master of it: and soon discovering that Clarence was but indifferently acquainted with more important histories, and totally ignorant of the sciences necessary for perfection in the profession of arms, he made it one of his own amusements to awaken him to the ambition of knowing more.

Thus, in their sauntering moments, he frequently made allusions to circumstances which his companion was obliged to enquire further about, ere he could enter into the deep sense of the other's discourse. At first, Clarence put these questions frankly and frequently; but he soon grew ashamed of ignorance, conscious that it was the consequence of past refractoriness. By degrees then, his questions became fewer; till at length he listened in total silence. A painful sense of inferiority to the person he was emu-

lous of equalling, caused this sad abstraction; and for one whole morning, the sensitive boy shunned every body; pondering over his own deficiencies; looking till his "mind's eye" ached, upon the shining acquirements of Adhemar; and thinking whether it were not better to tell that friend at once, what he felt and what he purposed.

The natural ingenuousness of Clarence's character, eventually carried it over pride. He made the full confession of former negligence; owned his repugnance to study of every kind; but avowed that he now felt there was a stronger principle in his soul after all, that of determining to be like the person he most admired in the world. After this honest adulation, it is needless to say what were the pains the gratified Chevalier took to smooth the paths of knowledge to so true an admirer, and by accomplishing him more, to render his mind's homage more distinguishing.

The visit of the Prince de Condé to the camp at Avignon had been solely to discover the Duke de Guise's plan for the opening war in Italy, and to learn whether there were more laurels likely to be reaped beyond the Alps, than beyond the Somme. Condé's military judgment fixed upon the Milanese as the best theatre for successful action; and Guise had determined upon marching direct to the invasion of Naples. The former, therefore, quickly decided between the army of Picardy and that of Italy; and, having made his brother and nephew of the same opinion, they were all withdrawn to enjoy themselves at Moulins, until the first blow should be struck on the northern frontier.

During his first three or four weeks sojourn at this celebrated chateau, previous to the appearance of the bridal train from Estonteville, Clarence had a long period and ample leisure for perfecting his acquaintance with the mind and heart of the

Chevalier. He did not always understand the latter it is true; but he was rarely displeased with its incomprehensibility. What was open in Adhemar, seemed admirable in his grateful eyes; what was shrouded, interesting. The Chevalier, meanwhile, who piqued himself upon managing his own conduct, so as to prevent their ordinary associates from thinking that he considered Clarence Willoughby in any other light than that of an amiable *elève*, was hourly more gratified by the ardor, and sincerity, and freshness of his favourite's feelings.

With the tact of experienced courtiers, even those gay chevaliers whom Clarence believed as artless and reckless of all, save honor, as himself; even they knew how to bend to his opinion, and to dress themselves in the glass of their loftier companion's humour. Like him, at times they affected to treat the young Englishman merely as an amusing creature, *piquant* from his ignorance of the world,

and delightful from the amiable absurdities such ignorance betrayed him into: but, like the Chevalier himself, they saw and felt that Clarence was far more than this; and that, under those wild shoots of uncultured fertility, lay a soil rich in precious ore, and capable of the noblest harvest.

Some of these ambitious or covetous courtiers, took aim at the Chevalier's known foible, by seeming to consider his new favorite, merely as a plaything, or a thing protected. Others, less subtle and more anxious to gain their object, continued their court to Bourbon, by paying such attentions to Clarence as marked their belief in his ascendance. Some treated him with impatient jealousy; others with cold disdain: but the majority let him make his way with them and the princes, as accident or his own merits determined.

Amongst this unprejudiced, kindly set, Clarence found spirits in a great degree

congenial with his own; and too happy in their society, and that of the Chevalier, to seek out causes for disquiet, only amused himself with the splenetic moods and chilling demeanour of the lesser number. His sallies, in return for their bitternesses, were so gay, so unexpected, so entirely free from the slightest particle of ill-humour, that he rarely left his enemies as malignant as he found them. The charm of his countenance and voice, had power to lull even envy asleep for awhile; and the remembrance of his first check to wilful impertinence, in the person of Beaurevoir, effectually prevented all who wished to preserve themselves, and the Bourbon favour, from risking similar insolence.

Certainly, there is a compelling power in true dignity of soul, which awes, we know not why, bolder spirits differently tempered. The ignoble bravo, who would stand undaunted before the mouth of a cannon, is often seen to quail under the eye of honorable indignation.

Perhaps at so early an age as his, Clarence owed this moral sceptre, less to the belief in his personal courage, than to the general conviction of his generosity, truth, and forbearance. It was observed that he always discriminated between the ebullitions of temper in his companions, and the premeditation of insult; that he frankly told his intimates whenever he thought them wrong or foolish; but that he was never known to discuss their indiscretions, with others. It was granted too, that if he made merry with any one's peculiarities, he never did so unless the persons he rallied were present to join in the laugh.

It is true, that Clarence could not deny himself the amusement of painting the Baron de Roche Blanc's character one day, when the Prince de Condé asked about him. Yet the ridicule was so obviously deserved, and the manner of exercising it so purely playful, that not one of the joyous party, whom a description

of that elderly gentleman's absurdities convulsed with laughter, ever apprehended a similar exhibition of themselves.

In fact, it was only necessary to hear Clarence speak for a few minutes, to be convinced that nothing, except genuine folly and pretension, were the subjects of his sportive archery; and, consequently, that his spirit of ridicule was widely different from that more abundant sort, which mocks the excellence it either cannot comprehend, or will not imitate.

By the aid of couriers occasionally going between Moulins and Nerac, Clarence was enabled to hear from, and to write to his father. But, like most animated persons, his letters were little more than vivid sketches of the events passing around him, calculated rather to awaken, than to satisfy, the curiosity of those he wrote to.

It was sufficient, however, for Mr. Willoughby that his son was well, and delighted and delighting others, and that as

yet no chill had happened to his enthusiasm for the Vicomte de Limoges. As for Clarence, every time he received an affectionate packet from L'étoile, he felt so grateful for his father's unreproaching surrender of his society, that he wondered how he himself could continue to accept the sacrifice. But still some new pleasure, or new object of more serious interest, would start up and efface the impression.

Clarence was, however, conscious of not wasting his time at Moulins: consequently, he did not deem himself culpable in wishing to remain there. He was daily taking lessons in all the exercises necessary for an accomplished gentleman; he was acquiring the language, as it may be termed, of that new country, a court; where it might some day, perhaps, be his destiny to act a part; and he had already learned to be ambitious of loftier things, which he was trying to compass with the assistance of Adhemar de Bourbon.

Thus, his days were neither running to

waste, nor his enjoyment referable to mere pleasure only: a manly sense of there being more to do in the world than to pass through it in hunting mere amusement, was beginning to establish itself in his mind, and to mix with all his musings. He discerned that even under the mirthful madness of the Prince de Condé, such a sense was stationary and evident. Although that patriotic prince went laughing and singing, like him, along the road of youth, he was never seen to withdraw his eye from the loadstar of public duty. The news of the Comte d'Enghein's nuptials having taken place, was brought by some avant courier of the king and queen of Navarre, who had graced the ceremony itself, and had to accompany the bridal train to Moulins. The Princess de Condé had arrived only a few hours before, to be in readiness for their reception; and to give the last graceful touches, a woman's hand only can give, to the embellishments of the chateau.

Her taste, happily, was of a noble kind: and no scentless wreaths, mocking nature's garlands, were therefore hung round the short thick pillars of solid stone which supported the hall; no fantastic devices of Venetian mirrors, bordered with *true-love's knots in goldsmith's work*, masked the painted glass of the ancient windows, where saints, heroes, and monsters unknown to all but heralds, were seen flaming in deep and gem-like colours.

The venerable tapestries, banners, and effigies, remained exactly where they had been standing or accumulating for above five hundred years. The Princess of Condé's care was only to see that every thing was in order; and that an ampler display of family magnificence than ordinary, was made without blunder by the long retinue of chamberlains and sewers.

As night drew on, the whole edifice was illuminated; forming almost an awful object, as it seemed burning on

the dark blue sky, amid woods of solemn stillness and extent. When the bridal party appeared, escorted by a long retinue of gentlemen on horseback, splendid fireworks shot up from the pointed towers and the battlements, to fall down again in showers of light; cannon were fired, and banners waved. The sides of the moat, and of the draw-bridge, were lined with military in the Bourbon colours, who lowered their arms as the state carriages passed, and discharged them the moment afterwards. Every part of the ceremonial was in harmony with the antique mansion itself, and with the warlike characters to whom it belonged.

In consonance with the fashion of those times, a ball, followed by a banquet, was to take place soon after the arrival of the bride and bridegroom. The family party met first by themselves; remaining some time together to exchange assurances of affection and joy, and to welcome the new member just added to their

house. This heart-felt ceremony over, the doors of the great saloon opened, and two distinct parties entered by separate entrances at the same moment.

Taking their course up the room, by different ways; to the right, went the Queen of Navarre, led by her graceful husband, and followed by their court: to the left, came the interesting Marie d'Estonteville, her brow wreathed with white roses, (herself a white rose,) proceeding with timid step, on the arm of her happy husband, whose bending looks expressed the tender chiding with which he was begging her to raise her beautiful eyes, and efface all but themselves.

Clarence had never before seen such a picture as they formed: he looked at them till he saw but those two persons in the whole assembly; he looked on them till his heart beat with an emotion he knew not how to understand or to express: it was sympathy with love and happiness;

with a happiness he had hitherto never imagined, and a passion he had never felt. By degrees, this disturbance of soul subsided; and he was then able to gaze round, see and admire the brilliant *coup d'œil* of the company.

The Princess de Condé, with a train of ladies, equal in splendour and charms to those of the majestic queen, followed the duchess d'Enghien. So many elegantly attired women, Clarence had never seen before; so many beautiful ones he had never fancied. The lights they were beheld under; the jewels, the cloths of gold and silver, the transparent tissues they were dressed in, dazzled away criticism: all of them were young, sprightly, blooming; all, therefore, seemed beautiful. The harmony of their soft voices too, was absolute music. But soon the louder strains of harp and viol awakened music of another sort, and gave signal for dancing. Then followed the agreeable confusion of seeking partners, suing

acceptance, conquering bashfulness, suggesting new dances, and instructing novices in old ones.

In this *melée* of princes, princesses, knights, and beauties, Clarence mingled not. He stood smilingly by, afraid to trust his inexperienced feet among the mazes of so complicated a contrivance as a court dance: contenting himself, therefore, with admiring its ingenious involvements; and delighting his eye with the contrast of delicate and manly grace, as the chevaliers and their fair partners bounded lightly by him.

A thousand and a thousand times he wished for Aigline, that she might participate in this softer and more enchanting species of pleasure than any he had hitherto tasted. He felt that she would eminently enjoy the refined grace of the dance, and the more touching gratification of noting the interchange of looks between d'Enghien and his bride, as they lingered near each other while

continuing the figure with their partners.

In the absence of Aigline, Clarence then sought about for his friend de Bourbon, who had disappeared some time before, and now re-entered.—The sparkling of his countenance, spoke internal emotion of some pleasurable sort; but as yet, Clarence had never presumed so far upon his kindness as to question him on his feelings with the intimacy of equal rank and age. He now only expressed his admiration of the beauty and splendour before him, with his usual animation; avowing his surprise at the varied paradise of the world.

"It is prodigal in bright flowers, certainly," returned the Chevalier, glancing for a moment at the lovely faces passing before them; "but, my dear Willoughby, must I teach you, that the poisonous night-shade bears as beautiful a blossom as the refreshing orange? Do you remark that fairy vision yonder, with a

complexion of varying and celestial tints like the rainbow-pearl, and with those modestly dropping eye-lids?—she, that is so softly caressing my new aunt? —Would you not take her for innocence and fondness itself?—She has been my uncle Anthony's mistress; and she would willingly supplant, in my other uncle's heart, the unconscious young creature who has just made him a present of the noblest inheritance in France. Do not yield to appearances: let the sentinel be always on his post here;" he pointed, smiling, to Clarence's heart.

Clarence was consternated; it was impossible for him to doubt a syllable of what Adhemar de Bourbon told him; yet how to believe that all the angelic creatures he beheld, were only fallen angels! He whispered this contradiction of feelings to his friend, who then laughed.

"I really know no harm of any other woman in this assembly," the Chevalier replied; "but I can tell you I would

take none of them on trust; so I merely warn you to be upon your guard by times; for there have been more men undone by fair faces than either Paris or Rinaldo."

"But I care nothing for fair faces, except as pretty ornaments in a scene like this," returned Clarence, withdrawing his eyes from the dancers, and reddening a little. "Perhaps I ought to be ashamed to own that I would prefer the lines of a gallant army, at this very moment, to all that I see here."

"Say you so!" exclaimed Adhemar, his eyes lighting up with inexpressible fire; "then take your choice: here, we are to have novelty for a month, a company of comedians from Paris, an orchestra of musicians from Milan, a set of mummers* from England; a challenged match of all the manly games you have been learning here; balls, banquets, masques, hunting parties, without number;—and, finally, a day of noble

* The burlesque Christmas strollers then famous.

jousting. Does not such a prospect stir your blood?"

"It stirs my foolish spirits most assuredly," returned Clarence smiling. "I confess myself a boy still; and so, without caring particularly for any single pair of the bright eyes round us, I will confess that I admire them enough, collectively, to feel that their gracious looks might inspire me a little, if they were by, and I were qualified to enter the lists with such approved knights as yourself. As it is, I must content myself at this jousting, with being a looker-on — like a lady!" He smiled deridingly at himself, then added with franker fire, "But by this arm, noble Adhemar, some day or other, I determine to break a lance with the best of you!"

"First win your spurs!" exclaimed Adhemar, in a tone, which, though smothered, had something strangely rousing in it.—"A word in your ear — there are some, you know, who

will not sleep in the Bourbonois this night."

Clarence's eye-flash gave warning of the question just following, when the Chevalier pressed his arm strongly, in sign of silence, and drew him away.

Removed to a quarter of the long saloon, most remote from observation, they retired into the recess of a window, and conversed together unnoticed. There Adhemar, after engaging his eager companion to secrecy, unfolded to him, that he had received certain intelligence of what the war-council at the Louvre had determined upon: it was to declare war again, by the surprize of one of the frontier towns in the Netherlands; that Coligny, the governor of Picardy, was charged with this enterprize; and that the Connétable de Montmorenci was appointed to the command of the army, which was immediately to march into Picardy, for the purpose of supporting the governor, and checking the advance of the Spanish

forces. The Chevalier added, that he was resolved, therefore, to steal from Moulins that very night, in the expectation of gathering some of the very first laurels of the campaign.

New tides of blood seemed pouring into Clarence's veins as he listened: his bright colour went and came, and his respiration shortened. "Now, then, I claim your early offers!" he exclaimed in a voice that trembled with eagerness,—"take me with you!" "What! and leave the masquings, and the love-makings, and the jousting, and the ladies!" asked the Chevalier with an air magnaminously disdainful of them all, as Clarence thought it at that moment.

"All! all!" reiterated his impatient companion, "only tell me what I am to do—who I am to bid respectful farewell to — and I am ready the next instant."

"Not a creature," whispered the Chevalier, "we must steal away.—Your servant, and one only of mine—no others.

—Is your fellow to be trusted, if he promises discretion for the next half hour? if he is, I will give him his lesson."

Clarence pledged himself for the faithful Bearnese, who had come with him from Roche Blanc, and the Chevalier retired.

"You must part then now—pass into the garden presently—be near St. Louis's yew-tree, and I will join you in due time. You shall have leisure to take counsel of soberer thoughts; so I commend you to them." Adhemar de Bourbon then mingled with the lighter crowd in the saloon, and shortly afterwards appeared entirely occupied in making a species of sentimental court to one of the ladies in the train of his new sister.

From the instant of their separating, Clarence wandered about that dazzling apartment as if he walked in a dream; his heart was full of nameless, stirring expectation; his face was bright with them: and if so extraordinary an illumination, without

any visible cause, incited the curious or admiring remarks of the fair creatures around, their murmured remarks were lost upon his occupied senses.

Once or twice he asked mechanically of those who joined him, whether there were any of the illustrious generals present, whom he longed most especially to see. They were then pointed out to him; but as he wistfully perused their faces, he did so, less from curiosity to know their lineaments, then to read in their countenances the secret of the Chevalier.

After tedious continuance, the dance ended. The dancers then broke into parties, or sat aloof in couples, evidently willing to prolong the pleasure of belonging to each other. Clarence glided from amongst them, into an armory, which formed a sort of closet to the state saloon.

The single window of this lesser chamber was open to admit the air: it looked upon the upper terrace of the garden.

Here the moonlight was sleeping, as we might suppose it slept the first night it shone in Paradise.

The solemn shades of the high and stately trees at a distance; the lighter forms of the nearer shrubs, clustered at intervals, as if to let in the rays of this beautiful moon on the lawny spaces between their groupes; the sullen murmur either of the water in the moat, or of the sedges growing beside it; all these objects were calculated to awaken feelings of a very different nature from those inspired by the ball-room. Even the armory itself, with its window-frame of carved stone-work, heavy, but of majestic simplicity; even this silent chamber, crowded with the suits of many a valiant knight, long since pillowed on earth, was pregnant with serious thought.

As Clarence gazed on the armour of different centuries, glistening in the same silvery light which trembled over the garden, that light which had so often shone on

the wearers of this armour in their ladies bower, and on their fields of fame; his feelings assumed a different character, and giddy eagerness gave way to sober consideration.

It was impossible to look on those casques and cuirasses, dinted deep with many a heavy stroke, some of them showing where the fatal blow had dislodged a soul, and not think of wounds and death. Clarence then sighed at the idea of his father, to whom he was every thing; but conscious that he had Mr. Willoughby's consent to dare the dangers he was now invited to, he compromised with himself, determining to make up to his father, for the anxiety he might cause him on the score of personal safety, by scurpulously endeavouring to spare him the sharper pangs of grief and shame at a son's misconduct.

With this generous resolution Clarence resumed his cheerfulness, and vaulted at once out of the window, down upon the terrace.

As he passed under the high cypresses which bordered it, he turned his eyes mechanically towards the house. The whole of the side visible to him was brilliantly illuminated: the ball-room formed part of this; and its long range of shrine-like windows being open, gave him a full view of the company within. His own figure was confused with the shadows of the trees.

Upon a flight of steps leading down from the centre of this room to the terrace, he saw the happy d'Enghien and his bride standing as if to breathe the outward air of that beautiful night, and steal a few moments from wearying pageantry. While she leaned against the ponderous balustrade, d'Enghien was solicitously drawing a silken veil round the slender form of his beloved, to shelter her from the night dew, all balmy as it was; and she was tenderly regarding him with those dove-like eyes, which had not once been raised in the crowded ball-room.

How long afterwards did Clarence remember this sight of them!

A quarter of an hour did not elapse after he reached the yew-tree, before the Chevalier joined him: his step was hasty — his look animated: "You have not slept and dreamt, I hope, since we parted!" he said in a tone of gracious raillery. Clarence's glance and blush answered him. The Chevalier went on: — "There is no getting the drawbridge raised again at this time of night without frightening the ladies into fits, and the gallants out of their fool's suits into better harness; and I want no sharer in *my* adventure, except yourself." He added hastily, "Will you swim the moat with me?"

"Swim every flood between this and the Netherlands, if you like it;" Clarence answered promptly.

"I thought I was sure of you," resumed de Bourbon. "One of my people is over it ere this, to get horses

for us; and your rogue must follow his example, if you will really hazard a plunge into that mass of foul water for my sake. The ladies here are to be treated to-morrow with some dainty sport of hunting, or dew-gathering, to medicine their fine complexions; and the gentlemen who have been swearing themselves their slaves to-night, must keep to their words to-morrow: so you and I, Willoughby, who scorn such gawds, will be on the borders of Picardy before one of them has remembered to ask what has become of us."

"And does no one else know this news?" asked our hero.

"Not a creature here," replied Adhemar. "I had a trusty agent in Valois's council on the watch for this moment, so I am sure of my game: for once I will get the start of my uncle Condé, and mar his monopoly of glory."

The Chevalier's eyes sparkled as he spoke, but it was not with such generous

fire as Clarence Willoughby could have wished. He did not understand the desire of keeping even glory to himself — he rather longed to have communicated to all the brave spirits within the chateau the intelligence which inflamed him with such ardor, and thus to have given each of them a chance of sharing it: but inclined rather to think himself foolish, than the person he admired unamiable, he did not utter this vague thought.

De Bourbon proceeded to state the few arrangements he had made for their provision of horses on the road, and for the more leisurely arrival of their baggage afterwards.

Clarence professed himself satisfied with every thing, and ready to depart on the instant. They then passed swiftly down the sloping garden, through one of those long alleys of tall evergreens which completely screens whatever passes between their leafy walls: thence descending several green stages, they

reached the extremity of the house garden, (for the principal one extended to a distance on the opposite side of the moat,) and letting themselves out at a private door, they came within call of Clarence's servant.

Sheltered by the lower wall, which then girdled the castle, the young men silently stripped off their clothes, gave them to the servant to conceal amongst the ivy of the buttresses, and dashed into the water.

Three or four strokes of such active arms as theirs, were sufficient to carry them across. On the opposite bank, and screened by a clump of dwarf oak, the Chevalier's confidential equerry was waiting with the riding suits of each. While they were putting them on, Adhemar de Bourbon said in a low, deliberate voice, "Had you no fear of a shot being fired after us, while we were swimming that filthy Hellespont?"

"I certainly did expect such a thing,"

replied Clarence gaily; "and if their muskets had been charged with civet into the bargain, I think we might have pardoned them for sending a shot or two after us. It will cost us a fortune in perfumery to sweeten our villainous-smelling bodies."

"You really thought we were likely to be fired upon, and yet you never said so!" exclaimed the Chevalier earnestly, disregarding the lighter part of his companion's answer.

"If I am to care for the chance of shots, while in your company, noble Adhemar," cried Clarence more gaily than before, "I suspect my life will be remarkably pleasant pastime."

With a vivacity unusual to him, the Chevalier suddenly squeezed Clarence's hand, whispering, "By heaven, you are of proof steel!" Then releasing it as suddenly, motioned the way to their horses.

The guards on the heights of the

chateau had either drank too many healths at their rejoicing board of that evening, or were so used to connive at the escape of their comrades when off duty, and inclined for revelry beyond the moat, that they saw three persons swim across, dress, mount, and gallop off, without heed or comment. Adhemar vowed that Clarence's foolish squire, as he called the honest Bearnese following them, must have made up for his own forgetfulness, and bribed the soldiers into such quiescence; but upon questioning the man, he became convinced that the latter had been faithful to his promise of acting promptly, and keeping silent.

As Clarence vaulted upon the fleet animal provided for him, his head was turning round with the conviction of being preferred by Adhemar de Bourbon before all the great, and good, and titled, in the mansion behind them. One more experienced might have started at so fantastic a preference: a coxcomb would

have been inflated by it. But Clarence's young, unadulterated, unsuspecting heart, felt only an excess of grateful enthusiasm for the person who thus distinguished him; and, determining to deserve his preference, if possible — to devote himself to him even to death, if necessary — he extended his hand without speaking. The Chevalier saw his soul in his face; and, accepting the offered pledge, pressed his hand, saying, as he did so, "Yes, Willoughby, now we are *friends!*"

At the last emphasized word, Clarence bowed his suffused face, still too gratified, too agitated for speech; and the Chevalier, setting his horse at full speed, showed him that there was to be no more time given to sentiment. In another half hour they were out of sight of the chateau.

CHAP. VII.

The events of a campaign have little interest for any readers, except such as have borne arms themselves, or are connected with those that have. Thus it is not necessary to trace methodically the steps of Clarence Willoughby through the sieges, sorties, and pitched battles, in which it was his fortune to share, and his merit to win commendation.

By the side of the dauntless and scientific Adhemar, he tried his own metal. The surprise of Douay was the first enterprise undertaken by Coligny. The brilliant success of that enterprise, and the noble conduct of its conqueror to prisoners of every rank — to the wounded, the helpless, the bereaved — happily mingled so much pleasurable

admiration with the horror otherwise experienced at sight of extended suffering, that Clarence, after the first painful shock, recovered to consider the career of danger still worthy the election he had made of it.

This opinion was, perhaps, adopted by him from a motive absolutely the reverse of that high expectation which had originally conducted him to such a choice. The campaign was not likely to prove a fortunate one, auspiciously as it had begun. The flower of the French army were in Italy, under the Duke de Guise; and so ably had that haughty minion's party in the cabinet manœuvred for his glory and the disgrace of the brave and virtuous Coligny, that, after having commanded the latter to commence the war, by seizing a key-town of the Netherlands, they delayed from day to day those reinforcements of men and ammunition, absolutely necessary for the continuance of the planned operations.

Thus Philip's general, the Duke of Savoy, had time to assemble a force of sixty thousand experienced soldiers; and after insulting every fortified place he passed on his march, and so attracting Coligny's handful of troops to these menaced points, he suddenly appeared before the walls of St. Quentin. This town, considered the principal gate of Picardy, was scandalously destitute of military stores, and deficient in the strength of its garrison: every bold heart and fresh arm was, therefore, of consequence among its small catalogue of defenders. Clarence felt, that, by volunteering his services there, he would be preparing to encounter disappointment and loss, in aid of a man venerated by the virtuous of all opinions for his many virtues, and cruelly betrayed now by base party spirit. That consideration renewed the ardor with which Clarence had come to Picardy, while it ennobled the principle of his ardor.

Meanwhile, the zeal, and activity, and scientific combinations displayed by the Chevalier de Bourbon, exalted Clarence's enthusiasm for the character of this illustrious friend, as much as for his military genius. When he saw him day and night on horseback, rejecting rest, neglecting food, disdaining fatigue and danger, and all evidently and avowedly for the sake of promoting the plans of their ill-used chief, and so baffling the designs of Coligny's enemies, Clarence suspected not that Adhemar de Bourbon had the mortification of the Guises more in view than justice done to Coligny.

But de Bourbon, who had now learned Clarence perfectly, and knew himself still better, was aware of what he must hide if he meant to preserve that devoted attachment unimpaired, which the belief of perfection in himself had inspired. The Chevalier had one dark cavern in his heart which no one had ever fathomed: yet were there many

noble and beauteous chambers in that heart.

If his manner was reserved, his acts were gracious: he never urged the value of his own services, but when he was soliciting something for another. His personal attention to the comfort and ease of his sick or wounded soldiers, was only equalled by his impenetrable disregard of their murmurs when perfect health rendered them competent to their duties. During a siege, he was so strict in the performance of its most revolting duties, that no motive, no appeal to his softer sensibilities, induced him to relax in them; but the moment the place was surrendered, his sole business seemed to be that of defending it from the outrages of his own troops. In the distribution of plunder, Adhemar de Bourbon never shared: he did not even appropriate it to himself by the popular act of making it over to others. "My revenue shall never be swelled by such an ignoble

source," he one day said to a person who ventured to question him on the reason of his refusal; yet the revenue he had, large as it was, seemed too small for the greatness of his spirit. Instead of such a crowd of gaudy pages and useless lacqueys as attended the other princes to the army, his train consisted only of soldiers completely armed and well mounted. He maintained two regiments at his own expence; one of infantry, and another of cavalry; and with such claims upon his purse, it may be supposed how little he left himself for vanities.

Clarence saw all this — felt all this; wondered no longer that the Chevalier de Bourbon's high reputation had raised him nearly to a level with the legitimate princes of that royal house; and every letter he wrote to L'étoile, was therefore full of his just praises.

Upon the investment of St. Quentin, (into which Coligny threw himself, rather determining to perish under its ruins,

than in the vain hope of maintaining it,) an army, not exceeding in number one third of that of Spain, was collected under the Connétable de Montmorenci. In this army came the brothers Condé and d'Enghien, whom some disgusts given by the court of Paris, had hitherto kept inactive. The critical situation of Coligny, however, carried it over the pride of blood, and the resentment of slighted services; and tearing themselves from the tender delights of their separate homes, they flew to the standard of Montmorenci.

The dreadful battle before St. Quentin, in which the best and bravest of France either perished or fell into the hands of the victors, is well known to history; the Connétable himself was a prisoner; the Comte d'Enghien killed. Prodigies of valour were performed in vain by men, whom no foresight, or no honesty in those entrusted with the power, had supplied with proper arms or information.

Clarence, therefore, in beholding the face of war for the first time, beheld it frowning; and saw only barren laurels attempting to cover its snaky locks. How different was such an object from the charming image pictured by his blinded fancy, and painted by the laughing pencils of his acquaintance at Escalette! It must be confessed that such a sight of his idol stripped it of all its illusions, and that henceforth he began to think less of glory and more of duty. Yet, Clarence, personally as dauntless and enterprizing as the boldest there, gave way to none in promptitude and activity. Too young and inexperienced to hazard modes of distinguishing himself by exploits of uncertain utility, he attracted, occasionally, the notice and praise of Coligny himself, by that mixture of frank humility and generous hardihood, with which he avowed himself ignorant of all that related to military action, except determination, willingness, and obedience. The Cheva-

lier, in truth, often planned, what, but for Clarence's resolute courage, impenetrable secrecy, and quickness of comprehension, must have failed in the execution; yet, Clarence never dreamt that he deserved more praise than the school-boy does, when he repeats faithfully the lesson set him by his master: and, rather inclined to make himself acquainted with his new profession by practical observation than by studying it in dry treatises, as he thought them, he courted every opportunity of novel and bold action.

Previous to the battle of St. Quentin, Adhemar de Bourbon and Clarence succeeded in reaching Montmorenci's army, in which Conde was appointed general of cavalry. The regiment of Limoges claimed its colonel, and Clarence Willoughby was eager to seek his promised *guïdon* in that of Conde. Their bold truantry from Moulins was soon forgiven by the brother princes; though there

were some jealous spirits in their train, who were ready to quarrel with the young adventurer, as they now and then called Willoughby, who had so strangely monopolized the favour of the Chevalier Adhemar.

In the fatal day of St. Quentin, it was Clarence's fortune to be close to the amiable d'Enghien, when his horse was killed under him. The prince was leading his regiment to the charge, when the creature fell: Clarence instantly remounted him, regardless of his own safety: d'Enghien smiled with greater sweetness than usual, and galloped forward. Clarence saw him no more in life. Twelve hours after the battle, he beheld those smiling features fixed in the stillness of death; as his body was courteously sent in from the camp of the enemy, whither he had been conveyed, dying, from the field.

What a sickening recollection of the bridal evening at Moulins, then came over our hero! He saw, again, the

beautiful heiress of Estonteville, regarding with eyes of tender happiness this altered countenance, then animated by life and love! The picture changed, and he fancied he beheld her over his bier. "These are the horrid moments of war!" exclaimed Clarence, in a low voice, to the Chevalier, as they both turned away from sad contemplation of the fallen warrior. "One's own fall has nothing so frightful in it; but that of a friend — a companion — one so great, and so happy lately" — a heavy sigh finished the imperfect sentence. Adhemar de Bourbon echoed it more heavily — his eyes had been gloomy, though tearless, all the time he stood over the body upon which the affectionate Condé was weeping with the violence and sincerity of childhood. They now moistened visibly; while he said, in a softened tone, "Yes; my poor uncle *was* happy! and yet," he added, after a pause of sterner reflection, "you will hear of his widow marry-

ing again, doubtless; and that right soon. Why should you start, Willoughby? Women are easily persuaded; and the House of Lorraine will find it good policy to strengthen themselves with her dutchies and baronies."

"Do you not think, dear my lord," asked Clarence, anxiously, "that your hereditary hatred of that house, makes you sometimes too hasty in imputing basenesses to them, they perhaps never meditate?"

"My hatred is not all hereditary," returned de Bourbon, after a long pause: "I *do* hate them; but it is because they have uniformly opposed the one hoarded wish of my soul."

Clarence would have enquired what that wish was, but the Chevalier abruptly changed the conversation, and talked of some military movement.

What had passed on this occasion was not, however, readily forgotten by Clarence. He recollected some hints dropt

at Moulins by one of the party there, purporting that the Count d'Enghien, in marrying the heiress of Estonteville, had carried off the object of his nephew's secret wishes.

Adhemar de Bourbon's manner now seemed to give colour to such a tale. His abrupt departure from Moulins, almost immediately upon the arrival of the bridal party; that mixture in him of morbid remark, with noble action, which was a mystery to the confiding Clarence, appeared to justify the idea. Such a secret removed at once every suspicion of natural infirmity in the character, which its admirer would fain have exalted into absolute perfection; and, by making Adhemar's occasional gloom of discourse the consequence of deceived or disappointed affection, rendered that interesting which must otherwise have become displeasing.

The same circumstance made apology also for that determined reserve upon

the closest interests of his heart, which Clarence could not but see the Chevalier still preserved, even to him whom he dignified with the title of friend! Hitherto this reserve had stung him, in despite of himself; but contented, henceforth, to endure such mortification from one so loved, and now so tenderly compassionated, the enthusiastic Clarence determined to win confidence at last by studiously deserving it. And though, perhaps, inwardly flattered with the idea of conquering that proud grief, which refused itself to every other's seeking, a more generous feeling prompted him; and the hope of giving to such a nature, the grateful conviction of security in its affection, and sympathy with its wrongs, soon possessed him wholly.

The capture of St. Quentin itself, with Coligny and his remnant of famished soldiers, followed quickly upon the battle. All Picardy was exposed; its governor a prisoner; the shattered army of Mont-

morenci without a chief. The Prince de Condé, his nephew, and such of the higher noblesse as that disastrous battle had spared, continued vainly disputing every inch of ground with the advancing enemy; but it was like opposing a rampart of few, and disjointed materials, to the full flood of ocean.

Every town between St. Quentin and Paris, had opened its gates to the conqueror; and the capital itself must have fallen into his hands, had not the Bourbon Princes displayed talents and energies worthy their illustrious name. Their devotedness saved the monarchy, but Guise, summoned from Italy, hastened to gather the harvest of renown they had sown; —he came with an army, swelled by auxiliary troops collected in the different states he marched through; and with all the power and wealth of the state at his disposal. Under such circumstances, with his own courage and skill in addition, assisted by those of Condé, this

fortunate general, by the bold attack and lucky seizure of Calais, turned the tide of success and opinion.

Calais was taken in the severity of winter; and, allowing neither himself nor the enemy the usual respite given in that season, he carried the campaign into the following year: adding to his conquests those of other places in a different quarter; and so opening a direct road to the Flemish possessions of the Spanish monarch.

Never soared human glory on loftier wing, than did that of Guise, at this period! The recapture of Calais from the English, after it had been in their hands above two centuries, caused such an intoxication of joy, that, estimating the merit of the exploit rather by their passions than their reason, the whole nation united in extolling its conqueror beyond all the heroes of ancient or modern times.

The gallant d'Enghien's death, the

captivity of the virtuous Coligny, and of the veteran Montmorenci, the matchless services and sacrifices of the princes, were all forgotten in the popular clamour raised in favour of Guise. The insolence of the house of Lorraine increased, in proportion to the exaltation of its chief; and Condé, after having lavished his fortune, and spilt his best blood in support of the great charge bestowed on him by the Connétable, was now refused a confirmation of it by Montmorenci's powerful successor, and proffered one of inferior rank. Even our impetuous hero admired the magnanimity with which this hot-blooded prince triumphed over his indignation, and preferred serving his king and country in a subordinate station, to remaining inactive.

Mindful of his engagement with Mr. Willoughby, the prince kept his eye upon the conduct of Clarence; though unable, from his situation and duties, to extend his notice much beyond that:

and satisfied with the broad outline of generous and intrepid character which he could thus distinctly see there, he left to his nephew the task of perfecting him in the duties of a soldier; contenting himself with occasionally asking him a kindly question as they encountered on their rounds of duty, or singling him out, when occasion presented, for some act of daring service.

Still fighting, and now always victoriously, the French army were surprised by the arrival of their king. From the moment of his appearance, the command of the Duke de Guise ceased. Alarmed at the growing insolence of the Lorraine faction, Henry suddenly resolved to give it a timely check, by terminating Guise's martial exploits. Overtures of peace had been covertly made to the court of Paris by the emissaries of Philip, whose agents there, knew when to seize the favourable moment for pushing their master's interests. This moment had presented itself.

Guise's brother, the Cardinal de Lorraine, had just offended the king's mistress; and some indiscreet countenance given by the King and Queen of Navarre to the religious meetings of the Hugonots in the capital, had contributed to render Henry eager for the termination of a war, which must prevent him from lowering the pride of the one, and chastising what he termed the criminal apostacy of the others.

With this view, he repaired to the camp of his general, while his rival monarch sought that of the Duke of Savoy.

Although autumn had scarcely commenced, orders were issued for the troops to enter into winter cantonments. The result of such an order was easily foreseen.

Preliminaries of peace were then arranged at Cambray, and various difficulties endeavouring to be smoothed, when the news of the Queen of England's

death, authorized France to demand better terms, and obliged the royal widower to grant them. Yet, those terms either were disgraceful to the patriotic and family-feeling of the French monarch, or proved that the Guises continued to dominate over his will, in despite of himself. Henry consented to restore all his former conquests in Piedmont to the Duke of Savoy; but made no stipulation for the restitution of Upper Navarre, and those important places in the Low Countries which belonged to his kinsman, Anthony Bourbon, as husband of Jeanne d'Albret, and as Duke de Vendôme.

Peace, however, was ardently desired by the French king, and convenient to the Spanish monarch, whom the death of his consort had deprived of English assistance. A preliminary treaty was signed before the year concluded — the troops disbanded — the officers were released from duty — every one betook

themselves to their own homes, or their own wanderings, as inclination led. The Prince de Condé, and the Vicomte de Limoges, then hastened to Paris; while Clarence, willingly promising to return and join his illustrious friend there, whenever Mr. Willoughby would spare him; and if not there, at Limoges—set off with a mixture of eagerness and regret for the peaceful home he had left eighteen months before.

CHAP. VIII.

And what had happened at Roche Blanc during these eighteen months?

Mr. Willoughby had been supplying the want of his son's society by the frequent perusal of that dear son's letters; and trying to get over the long period of his absence by breaking it into separate parcels.

Thus, upon the arrival of one courier from the army, he calculated how long it would be ere another could arrive; never permitting himself to imagine that the expected messenger of joy, might prove the messenger of evil. Clarence almost unconsciously made this repose of spirit easy to his naturally placid parent; never detailing any of the alarming or distressful passages of a soldier's life. He

wrote of success, or failure, in the gross; always described himself well, and in high spirits; and repeatedly alluded to the period of his return, as to a certain festival, for which his father and friends must prepare.

Mr. Willoughby received the flattering picture thus presented to him; and because Clarence never wrote of being wounded, blessedly believed that neither scar nor bruise had yet blemished the face he loved, or the form he admired.

In the absence of her early playmate, Aigline de Venzêles religiously obeyed his parting injunction of attending to his father. A sentiment of obligation at first carried her to L'étoile, instead of to her ordinary haunts, whenever she had an hour at her own disposal; but soon inclination alone became motive sufficient. As the excessive spirits of girlish years softened, and those ruder pleasures lost their charm, which had only tempted because they ensured her the society of

her adventurous companion, the tastes and feelings natural to her sex and character developed rapidly. She then felt an attraction to L'étoile, purely attributable to Mr. Willoughby himself: and fatigued, as she constantly was, with her step-father's declamations about nothing, and chilled by her mother's coldness, she sought shelter from both, by the side of unpretending goodness.

Mr. Willoughby, indeed, was one of those characters, which the Scotch alone knew how to paint by a single phrase — "He was aye kind to beast and body;" and though Aigline, as she frequented his society, did not come away conscious of having acquired much information from his discourse, nor been thrilled with very acute sympathy; she was always aware of a warmer glow at her heart. Mr. Willoughby never had a habit of *giving himself out*, as it may be called, to any one; much less to very young people: — so, in Aigline's company he spoke one minute, and

mused away the next twenty; and when he spoke again, would talk of something he fancied agreeable to her, not of the subject nearest his own soul. Yet, with all this, the impression he made was amiable and endearing; to renew such impressions, was pleasing to Aigline herself: to visit Mr. Willoughby, was an act of charity to him, and of faithfulness to her absent friend; she therefore dedicated nearly all the evenings of the first summer Clarence went, in slowly pacing with him up and down the long avenues of L'étoile.

As winter approached, and the days shortened, her companionship was necessarily transferred to the fire-side: there she used to read to him, or recite the metrical romances taught her by Clarence; or sit at work, amusing him with her innocent and fanciful conversation. Whenever the Baron and Baronne were added to their quiet parties, then Aigline fell back into comparative and contented

insignificance; limiting her employments to making their coffee, replenishing Mr. Willoughby's snuff-box, or singing ballad after ballad at his request, accompanied only by the sighing winds without.

Among the primitive inhabitants of a village like Roche Blanc, the daily visits of a lovely young creature, growing into womanhood, to a solitary widower of fifty, appeared the mere act of common kindliness. The motives of both were too apparent to be mistaken by such as mixed in their society upon equal terms; and, for the inferior orders, they were so habituated to apply the axiom of "Kings can do no wrong," to all above them, that had there been any thing really censurable in the familiar intercourse of "the good Seigneur at L'étoile and pretty Ma'mselle at the Chateau," they would have been slow in making the discovery.

Madame la Baronne, also, had so long accustomed herself to consider this amiable girl as a child, that she was back-

ward in finding out that others ceased to think her so. Aigline was yet longer of making the discovery herself. Her mother never encouraged young society at her house, nor by her own conversation ever awakened her daughter to a vague suspicion that she was either formed to feel, or to inspire, a tenderer sentiment than common good-will. If the Baron, among his random flights of eloquence, sometimes talked of *la belle passion* and his former conquests, she was able, with very little difficulty, to throw all the contempt she wished upon the passion, as he described it: and, whenever assuming his faded suit of past gallantry, he suddenly took the fancy of telling his step-daughter that she was absolutely becoming dangerous to the peace of inoffensive people, and evidently aware of the power bestowed by a pair of fine eyes, his lady frowned him into silence, and awed even Aigline's thoughts into silence, by calling her a child, and

lavishing the epithets of boldness, impudence, indelicacy, upon some blameless remark made by one of Aigline's age, on the forbidden subject of honourable attachment. But aware, at last, that this mode of interdiction must shortly lose its power, in consequence of her daughter's rapid advance towards perfect youth, she changed her battery; and assuming an air of yet greater severity, asserted, that elder daughters, when so much older than their brothers and sisters, were born for them; and that Aigline, she was sure, knew her duty too well, ever to heed such nonsense, or lend an ear to silly love-making; when she must be conscious that it was her duty to remain single, and supply her mother's place to her kind step-father and affectionate brothers and sisters, whenever it should please Heaven to remove her from the world.

How often do we see those who insist the most upon the duties of others, the

least punctual in the discharge of their own! Madame de Roche Blanc forgot that Aigline had a right to ask, at her hands, a mother's tenderness, a mother's fond anxiety for her individual happiness. She even forgot that Aigline had the further right of enquiring, why she, who was left the inheritress of a sufficient fortune, was not only made to depend upon another for the means of life, but taught to bless the very hand that had reduced her to such dependance. This pitiless mother, who could condemn the Catholic parents that sacrificed their children to the sterile gloom of a cloister for the sake of aggrandizing others, calmly calculated upon tutoring her first-born into the same joyless existence, with the world's cares added to her portion; and that, solely for the sake of a peevish, languishing child. It was Madame la Baronne's secret determination, that Aigline never should marry; because Aigline was essential to her personal

ease and comfort; and, were her mother to die, would most likely prevent the Baron from marrying again, and placing, perhaps, some hard step-mother over her darling Cecile. To make love ridiculous, therefore, and marriage terrific, was Madame Roche Blanc's unfailing endeavour.

Those once-venerated names, (now profaned by more than this selfish mother,) thus associated with the frippery sentimentality of the Baron, and the bitter sarcasms of his lady, were rendered almost hateful to Aigline; therefore, were never likely to enter her thoughts, whenever any new or familiar object excited a livelier emotion than ordinary.

Under all her disgusts, she went to L'étoile, to refresh her heart with Mr. Willoughby's unceasing kindliness, to talk with him of Clarence; to laugh with him, or rather for him, over the little amusing anecdotes she gathered to entertain him with through the day; and to snatch an

hour's reading by his fire-side in winter; or in summer, under his flowering limes.

Insensibly, Aigline acquired many new and valuable ideas from these desultory studies; and the leisure left her for reflection by the unsocial habits of her mother, and the vagrant ones of her step-father, expanded her mind rapidly. She began to think much, though vaguely as yet; for hitherto her sorrow had only been the absence of joy; not actual spirit-searching affliction. Nature had endowed her with elastic spirits; so that permission to carry flowers, or fruit, of her own rearing, to Mr. Willoughby's breakfast-table, would at any time make all the remainder of the day a holiday to her: and if, by chance, she was permitted to mingle, as she passed, with the evening-dance of the villagers, or to arrange their feast of the vintage, her innocent mind asked no costlier pleasure. She knew neither the pains nor pleasures of rivalry; nor the flutter of vanity; nor the glow of

conscious beauty. There were no young people of her own condition to admire, or to envy her; and all the old, loved her too dearly to think whether she were handsome, or otherwise. Aigline, therefore, did not know she was handsome; yet she wanted only to be seen in a wider circle, to be both admired and loved.

There was a wild and singular grace in her appearance, perhaps more enchanting than absolute beauty. Such a youthfulness of figure and countenance — such a mixture of brightness and bashfulness in her eyes, — that whether they were seen laughing through their sparkling fringes, like dew-drops in the light of morning, — or piercing, like tremulous moon-beams, the deep dark shades those beautiful lashes threw over them, they recalled, alternately, the softness and the vivacity of the gazelle's. The air of her slight figure, too, had something of a deer-like character; and it was impossible to watch her half-eager, half-hesitating

step, or see her bright black hair blowing on the winds, as carelessly and abundantly as the foliage of the trees above her head; and not imagine her some sylvan creature, wild as lovely, ready to bound away with the timid animals she resembled, at once their play-fellow and their queen.

Although Mr. Willoughby, now his son was away, felt that solitude might be an evil, he was little inclined to obtain society, by seeking it, as he was importuned by the Baron to do, daily at Roche Blanc; and yet he was soon unable to do without the frequent sight of Aigline. He liked to see her, because the expressions of her face, at times, reminded him of the more vivid countenance from which she had unconsciously caught them: he liked to hear her speak, not only because she talked of Clarence, but because she talked like him. There had always been a striking similarity in the voices of these young people, which, in spite of their very different complexions, often

caused them to be mistaken for brother and sister. The voices of each were equally sweet and clear; but Aigline's softer, lower, and lingering longer on the ear, might not unaptly be compared to a mellowed echo of his. It was not wonderful, therefore, that a fond father should make the sacrifice of indolent habits, to obtain for himself the pleasure of hearing a young creature, that reminded him in so many ways of his son.

To gratify both his home-keeping habits, and his inclination for Aigline's society, Mr. Willoughby had recourse to innocent stratagems: for he never presumed upon the pecuniary obligations of the Baron to him, as a reason for exacting complaisance in return; and he feared to weary out Aigline's amiable charity, by suffering her to entertain him alone. He therefore invented a variety of little rural festivities, by way of attracting the inhabitants of the adjacent chateaux, especially those of Roche Blanc to his solitary mansion.

Thus, after Clarence's absence, L'étoile became what it had never been during his abode in it. There were regular feasts given to the tenantry and neighbours at the hay-making, the sheep-shearing, and the vintage; little dances were made up on the instant, whenever good news came from the army; and the donor of the entertainment always appeared at it for awhile, with the few friends he could assemble round him.

In the woods of L'étoile it was known that the earliest strawberries, and the latest nuts, were ever to be found; that the peaches on the south-wall of the old house were always the ruddiest and the richest in the province; and that Mr. Willoughby's housekeeper made the daintiest compounds of confectionary, and pastry, tasted beyond the buttery of Navarre himself. Thus, there were always such temptations held out to Madame la Baronne for her younger

children's enjoyments, and so many hooks of vanity to draw the Baron, who disdained not to make *the capable* even at a rustic fête, that Mr. Willoughby was rarely disappointed in his plan of enticing the family from the chateau in the valley, to that upon the hill: and when he had not such brilliant temptations as these to offer them, he could find other companions for Aigline, in the Protestant minister and his wife, whose church they all frequented. The first, was an excellent well-read man; the latter, an inoffensive little woman, whose sole functions at L'etoile seemed limited to those of sitting at her knitting, looking up, and smiling, when she was spoken to, and answering in monosyllables.

Now and then some stranger, to whom accident introduced Mr. Willoughby, was added to his narrow circle; but this was an event of rare occurrence; and, when it did happen, the chances

were, that the persons so introduced were only birds of passage, on their way to some other place.

Old Godefroi, Clarence's early tutor in the fearful art of war, now and then walked from Lourdes, to enquire about his favourite; or to show with affectionate pride, a letter, containing good soldier-like accounts of the campaign; or some present from Clarence, in the shape of a trophy won from the enemy, or a handsome *tabatiere* purchased out of the spoil.

Upon these occasions, the old man was always detained for a week; and though he lived in the apartments of the steward, Mr. Willoughby often joined him, when he saw him sunning himself in the cheeriest part of the garden, to enquire how he was pleased with his entertainment, and to hear him speak of his son.

Aigline, too, made acquaintance with Godefroi; and, as she listened to his recapitulation of her friend's boyish ad-

ventures with real delight, and with smiling attention to those of his own warlike youth, she soon made, what he called, a lodgement in his heart; and, if she were not at L'etoile when he arrived there, he would be sure to seek her at Roche Blanc with some little offering; such as a straw-hat, or a pair of straw-slippers, of his own manufacture.

Aigline was now fast approaching the age of seventeen, when the prevailing character of the heart in after-life is so often determined by the first powerful events of that unheeded period. Her heart, deprived of the charming companion she had loved as a brother, began to yearn towards her banished sister, and to think of her with uneasy interest. She observed, that her mother made more than her annual visit to Lolótte; and that, after her return, her looks were for some time tinctured with a species of sadness, which gave unusual interest to those looks; tempting Aigline to throw

herself at her mother's feet, (into her arms she durst not venture,) and enquire her cause of sorrow. But, whenever she was on the point of doing this, the raising of her mother's eyes, and the expression of severe reserve which they assumed upon seeing the tears standing in those of her daughter, would frighten back her sympathy.

One day, as Aigline sat at work in a window, concealed by the accidental folding of a curtain, the Baron entered; and not observing her, exclaimed, in his ordinary tone of self-gratulation, "I have just struck out the happiest thought about our miserable girl! I'll send her a voyage. I'll stake my head,—and it is not a bad one, inside or outside, I flatter myself—that a sound fright does the business. Once put her in danger of being drowned—"

"Mercy, Sir! who are you talking of?" exclaimed Aigline, rising trembling from her seat.

The Baron was scarlet to his well-paired nails; and for once was dumb.

"Not of you, impertinent!" interrupted his lady, angrily; "of your sister Lolótte, she is ill:—she grows too fast."

Madame de Roche Blanc turned away her head. Aigline wistfully regarded her; she thought her mother appeared distressed, and taking alarm at it on her sister's account, she suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! dearest mother, why then is she kept away? If she were here, I would do every thing in my power to make her well; but do not send her upon the fearful sea by herself."

"The Baron and I surely know what is best for our children," returned Madame de Roche Blanc, having recovered presence of mind; "and I must insist that you neither mention this conversation to other persons, nor allude to it again to ourselves: the subject is unpleasant."

"And may I not know when my sister gets better?" Aigline tearfully enquired.

"I will tell you, when I hear next of her," drily answered la Baronne. "She is in no danger; her complaint is only vexatious." Something like a sigh burst out with the last phrase, ungracious as it sounded, and kindless as was the look of Madame de Roche Blanc's otherwise beautiful eyes. Aigline court'sied submissively, and went out with a full heart.

Some weeks afterwards, she was told by her mother that Lolótte was not at all worse; and, with this scanty information, Aigline was obliged to be satisfied. For awhile, she thought constantly of this poor neglected sister, who seemed even less considered than herself; and the idea depressed her spirits: but by degrees the poignancy of her pity abated, or rather the image of Lolótte was oftener driven from her mind by objects of immediate interest; and she became then

then capable of her usual avocations, and competent to visit L'étoile, without carrying to it a darkened countenance which she was forbidden to account for.

Thus passed the revolving seasons of Clarence Willoughby's absence, till the second winter set in with such severity of cold and storminess of weather, that Mr. Willoughby was threatened with the loss of all society. The Pine forest on the upper stage of the mountain where L'étoile stood, and the crests of the whole chain, were already laden with their heaviest weight of snows: the woods below, long stripped of their autumnal foliage, stood naked and dreary, shivering in the mournful blast; or vexed and tossed by fiercer ones into actual ruin.

The steep paths were strewn with the limbs of these majestic trees; and slippery with the crashing of plashy places but thinly iced over, became as unsafe as unpleasant; yet, Aigline dared them still: often surprising Mr. Willoughby

in the midst of a pensive reverie over his solitary hearth; and rousing him into pleasure, though her youthful cheeks, stiffened into marble by the cold, refused to dimple with her attempts at salutation.

Mr. Willoughby as often tried to chide her for these cruel proofs of affection: but the moment she recovered the movement of her lips, her playful answer, and brightening eyes, would convince him that a toilsome walk was as she said, health and pleasure to her.

Early in December, Mr. Willoughby was meditating a removal into the comfortable house of the Hugonot minister in the valley, until the bitter season, so severely felt on the heights, should be past; when the sound of a well-known voice without, made him hurry into the hall, and advance to the opening door. It was, as he suspected, Aigline, just relinquishing her hold of the servant's arm, who had been her support and pro-

tection up the steep and lonely paths of the mountain.

"Aigline, at this hour!" he exclaimed, with something of affectionate displeasure.

"Yes, Aigline, in very deed," she answered, throwing off the heavy cloak which had covered her nymph-like figure, and discovering a face bright with animation. "O, my dear Sir!" and without attempting to finish this address, she caught and kissed Mr. Willoughby's hand.

"What have you to tell me, my dear girl?" asked Mr. Willoughby, recovering from his surprise; "something pleasant of my boy, I guess. Come in, and tell me."

"I must not stay a moment after I have told you," replied Aigline, gently resisting the hand which would have drawn her through the entrance-hall. "The war is over—you will have Clarence back; for the Prince de Condé is expected at Nerac almost directly; and the Queen of England is dead."

"And who succeeds?" exclaimed Mr. Willoughby, eagerly, seeming to lose every other idea in this.

"I am ashamed to say, I thought of nothing but Clarence," returned Aigline, innocently; and still refusing to go further than the hall, because she had slipped away unknown to any one, she hurried on, imagining when Clarence would arrive, and what he would have to tell them, and whether he would bring any one with him.

Mr. Willoughby continued holding her hand in his, perfectly unconscious that he did so; till her attempt to withdraw it, as she said good night, recalled him to recollection. He recovered himself with a sort of sigh, followed by a smile; asking her, with more of his usual manner, if she were sure the news was true?

Her answer put this beyond a doubt.

Their pastor had just returned from Nerac, whither he had gone to confer

with the almoner of the Queen of Navarre, on a subject of common interest to the Protestant inhabitants of Bearn, when an avant-courier of the king's arrived, with information that his royal master was not many leagues behind; and with the public news which Aigline had already related.

"The good minister," she added, "had stopped, in his way home, at Chateau Roche Blanc to refresh himself, and enquire whether the Baron could, conveniently, send this intelligence up to L'étoile;" but the Baron had set off that morning for Bourdeaux, after the scent of some new speculation, and Madame la Baronne seemed to think that the news of peace might be sent quite as well to Mr. Willoughby in the morning. Aigline, meanwhile, not venturing to urge her suit, lest it should be forbidden, had stolen out of the room; sought a hale old man belonging to the garden, who required no entreaty

to take care of her through the woods to L'étoile.

To give pleasure to others, was giving joy to herself; she therefore saw nothing wonderful or praiseworthy in putting on her snow sabôts, wrapping herself in her cloak of stout Barêge, and climbing up the mountain to cheer a father with the prospect of seeing his son. She staid only while her good-natured attendant drank the comfortable cup of spiced wine presented to her; and immediately afterwards, kissing Mr. Willoughby's hand, fled away, like the bright exhalation which at the same moment, shot from the sky, and disappeared in the Larch woods.

The ensuing morning, the rumour of a peace became universal. Mr. Willoughby received the information from twenty different sources at once; so that Aigline's indiscretion might have remained a secret, had she chosen it. But Aigline could dare the avowal, after

it was done, of what, undone, she had feared to tell, lest prohibition might have followed. She therefore went at once to her mother, on returning from L'étoile, and received the ordinary recompense of self-slighting benevolence, in a rebuke of such harshness for officiousness, vagrant inclination, &c. &c. as sent her, drowned in tears, to her bed.

The next morning, however, brought for Aigline some equivalent for this suffering. Mr. Willoughby summoned all his humble neighbours to a rejoicing-party, in honour of the peace; and having secured the society of one or two families of a higher order, from a distance, sent to invite the family at Roche Blanc to give them the meeting, and accept beds at L'étoile. He took care to add, that a set of itinerant Italians, with dancing-dogs, and a punchinello, had luckily been seen in the road from Bayonne, and were secured for part of the evening's entertainment.

This fortunate achievement ensured the vote of that important little personage, Cecile, and from the moment she clamoured to go, Madame de Roche Blanc's consent was certain.

With such an object as entertainment in view, not one of the dwellers in the retired valley of Roche Blanc, found any difficulty in forcing their way up to the mansion, where it was provided; though, in truth, the way was not without danger, and every sweeping gust shook snow-showers from the loaded trees: no disaster, however, occurred. Mr. Willoughby had contrived to illuminate the most part of his road by huge lanterns, suspended on poles, and by branches of flaming pine well ensconced in the rocky hollows of the cliffs. When his various guests arrived, laid aside their furred coverings, and entered his thoroughly-warmed abode, they forgot fear and fretfulness, in mirth and good humour.

In the hall, piles of cheerful wood

were blazing on the hearth; whole boughs of glossy evergreens glistening round the walls; while spiced cups, and bowls of foaming posset, were mixed on the burnished table with refreshments of a more substantial kind.

Music, dancing, puppets, and games of artless glee, were the amusements provided for Mr. Willoughby's inferior guests; his superior ones were supposed capable of amusing themselves, or at least of receiving entertainment from seeing so many honest people happy. After witnessing the sports in the hall for awhile, they withdrew to a different quarter of the large old mansion, leaving Aigline, whose office it was to watch the lucky moment of drowsiness in her little sister, and then carry her to bed.

A delighted child is not so easily tired as the grown person who watches them with the wish of being released, at first imagines likely. Aigline, however, whose tender nature loved every thing it pitied,

and who really felt a sisterly affection for her petted and sickly charge, found no tedium in assisting her to reward the poor little dancing-dogs with nice food, or in prompting her in the execution of games above her childish capacity; but at length, afraid of the bad effect of amusement, protracted so much beyond Cecile's usual hour of rest, she saw, with some satisfaction, that the little girl's eyes were gradually closing.

As she sat watching her, during a suspension of noisy merriment, waiting till the heavy lid should actually seal in sleep, a slight noise at the entrance of the hall made Aigline look up. She saw a person standing, steadily regarding her; his figure wrapt in a large cloak, and his face concealed by the drooping feathers of the François cap he wore: he lifted this cap, and raised his smiling face. That hair, and those eyes, were not to be mistaken — it was Clarence!

With the joy, the freedom, the fond-

ness of brother and sister, at the same moment they sprang forward, and met in each other's embrace! More than the usual expressions of delight at meeting again, at seeing each other so much grown, yet not altered — not in the least altered (so both asserted), —poured from their lips at once. They did not forget, certainly, that they had an audience; but neither of them were conscious of a feeling they could have wished concealed. Aigline, therefore, resting on Clarence's shoulder, after rising from his breast, continued looking at him with sparkling and humid eyes, while answering his rapid questions about his father. She then discovered that he had not yet seen Mr. Willoughby, but was come into the hall to give her the pleasure of being his herald. At this intimation, she broke from his clasping hand, and merely allowing herself time to catch the words "Send him to the west room — I will go there," flew out of the hall.

The return of their dear young master was too joyful an event to be kept secret, even for the short space of time which Clarence had the extraordinary precaution to think might be necessary. Aigline met Mr. Willoughby hurrying from his company to seek his son: Clarence was, at the same moment, opening the hall-door, to gain the room he had appointed his father to meet him in. Aigline heard his joyful exclamation, and Mr. Willoughby's more fluttered one; then ran back to resume her almost forgotten office near the little Cecile.

Happily for Aigline's conscience, the child was still sound asleep; and she was removed, therefore, without difficulty, to the distant chamber, where she was to be with her mother. After this duty, her elder sister's task was over.

Aigline had just got through the minute catechizing of Madame de Roche Blanc, about what her darling had ate, and what abstained from, and whether

she was really asleep, or left to scream herself into fits from fear of being alone, when Mr. Willoughby and his son reappeared.

A short interval to themselves had been sufficient for a father and son, who had always lived together in peace and competence, parted in kindness, and met in joy: every one who had shaken hands with the young soldier in the hall, and all who crowded round him now, protested he was not in the least changed. Aigline echoed the remark; for although Clarence, almost nineteen, was very different in stature and manliness of proportions, from Clarence at seventeen, his figure preserved the same character of agile grace which distinguished it in his boyish days, and his countenance was unchanged.

The campaign certainly had not been fortunate, nor the peace a glorious one; but his individual career had been admired through it, and his private feelings

happy: Nothing, therefore, had yet tarnished the lustre of his heart's youth: how, then, could his face have lost even one of its bright beams?

Diffusing joy, and feeling joy, Clarence gave loose to the delight of seeing himself at home again. His spirits were heightened by the sight of so many old friends, neighbours, and servants, collected together; by the tenderer pleasure of finding his father well; by secret thankfulness that he himself had been spared to give and share such happiness; by the thought of all the interesting things he had to relate; and by the consciousness of being no longer a useless member of society. Never, in his boyish years, did his spirits rise to such a height of blissful extravagance as now. He refused to separate from the humbler party in the hall, to whom he had first shown himself, and from whom he had first tasted the deliciousness of animated welcome. Several of them had been his

companions in many a dangerous mountain exploit; others, had exchanged dry garments for his wet ones, when he sheltered with them, during a storm — some had shared their dinner with him — some had given him up their bed — in short, so many had claims on Clarence's grateful recollection, that he wished to give them the most gratifying proof of it, by sitting down to supper with them; and having succeeded in obtaining the sanction of the spiritual teacher himself, he transferred the gentry from the saloon, to the circle of honest rustics and respectful serving-men in the hall.

There, not exactly like a father amongst his children, but with the graciousness of a kind master, Mr. Willoughby presided at the head of his hospitable board; tempering rude mirth by his presence, and encouraging painful embarrassment by his kindness.

Clarence, seated beside the dearly-remembered companions of many a

childish sport or danger, laughed and talked incessantly: seemed to forget battles, marches, honours, defeats; palaces and courts, princes and queens; in short, every place, except Roche Blanc, and every incident, except such as had happened to him when there. In vain, some of the most inquisitive and ill-judging, would have learned the particulars of a siege, or the ceremonial of a courtly pageant; Clarence, in the glow of youth's best feelings, would talk only of what reminded himself and them, that they were the neighbours and friends of earliest life. He left the history of his military exploits, and of such scenes as necessarily marked the distinction of his new character, to his grave Bearnese, at the lower end of the table, who was detailing, in humming under-tones, many a wonderful enterprize and august spectacle, to his immediate neighbours.

Only once, during this evening, did Clarence revert to danger past; it was

upon a remark of Aigline's, while delightedly re-perusing his face and figure, and whispering her joy that he had never been wounded.

"Never wounded, Aigline!" he exclaimed, turning his face towards her, suffused with conscious desert, and lifting for an instant the hair from his forehead. "I should be ashamed, if I had not twenty such!" he added, seeing her shrink at sight of the recent scar thus displayed, yet look with an expression, which proved that some remnant of her girlish enthusiasm for honour, purchased at the risk of life, yet remained in her heart.

"I am a vain coxcomb, Aigline, I confess;" he resumed, actually blushing with shame at the truth he had just spoken. "If the Chevalier heard me boast thus, how he would disdain me! — The Chevalier! — O, Aigline! when you and I get by ourselves, I will make you absolutely in love with my gallant friend.

If you don't allow that he has actually walked out of one of our favourite books, in short, that he is a downright hero of romance — I'll swear, some witch has changed you since I went; that you are not the Aigline I left at Roche Blanc last May twelve-month!"

Aigline was eager enough to defend herself against such a charge; nay, to disprove it, by placing every sort of enthusiastic admiration at Clarence's disposal, for the rare qualities of his friend. But of Love she spoke not, recked not: she was prepared to think of the Chevalier de Bourbon, as she used to do of the Cid, or the famed Roland; and to lavish upon Clarence himself, the pure, yet livelier fondness of a sister. She was, therefore, happily invulnerable to the dark looks levelled at her, from time to time, by her mother.

The moody silence of Madame la Baronne at last attracted the attention of Mr. Willoughby, who had hitherto

been regarding the respectful hilarity of his lowly guests, and the frank gaiety of his son and Aigline, with unreflecting pleasure. Madame de Roche Blanc's countenance gave him a suspicion of her thoughts; and, uncertain himself what ought to be the future destiny of his son, he made an opportunity of breaking up the party, by enquiring if Madame did not feel indisposed.

Madame de Roche Blanc gladly seized the offered excuse; avowed a racking head-ache in consequence of the noise and heat of the hall; and, abruptly rising from table, desired Aigline would accompany her to her chamber.

Every one rose also. Clarence, sorry as he was to see the evening close so soon, was too happy to be vexed at any thing: Aigline was unconscious of having excited any displeasure. They therefore shook hands, and exchanged congratulations at being together again, as frankly as before; while Mr. Willoughby

desired his tenants and servants to reseat themselves, and resigning his place to his steward, led Madame de Roche Blanc to the door. Clarence staid a moment behind, to pour out a cup of wine, and drink it to his father's health, with the joyous and grateful party round the table. Their enthusiastic clamour at that honoured name, agitated him almost to folly as he called it to himself, without thinking it so; and his eyes were moist, therefore, when he thanked these good people, and alternately grasped all their rough hands.

By the time he rejoined his other friends, they were separating for the night. He would have remained behind with his father, but Mr. Willoughby, affectionately pressing his arm as they ascended the staircase, whispered, "No, no, my dear boy, let us both go to bed, and sleep as soundly as we can to-night; to-morrow, if you and I are left to ourselves, we must talk of

serious matters, and of a voyage to England."

Mr. Willoughby had, unawares, rendered one part of his injunction impossible; Clarence went to bed, but not to sleep soundly. The words "serious matters, and a voyage to England," vibrated in his ear, awakening that keen curiosity respecting his own prospects and his father's past life, which other interests had of late only lulled into a trance. The new connections he had made amongst persons in the highest and most important situations of life, and the new desires such intimacies had given birth to, heightened his impatience to become fully acquainted with all he had to hope or fear from his own fortune. He was at that age, also, when every threatened change, or extraordinary circumstance, is met with a throbbing mixture of awe and expectation, precious to natures of an ardent temperament. To them, untried scenes, and unknown feel-

ings, hold out such temptation as ocean offers to the inexperienced swimmer; who stands irresolutely for awhile on its brink, eyes its majestic waves, and those who proudly breast them, then plunges resolutely in, to sink or swim, as Heaven and his own strength determine.

CHAP. IX.

The guests at L'étoile were all departed the next day, when Mr. Willoughby and his son resumed the conversation with which they had parted the preceding night. Ere the former began his expected communication, he enquired of Clarence every particular of his absence; especially the characters and conduct of the illustrious persons under whose directions he had been acting: satisfied with all he heard, he then proposed to gratify the impatient curiosity of his son.

"I am not very like the hero of a romantic story, my dear boy," he said, with an embarrassment suited to his natural character; "nor, at my age, would it be wise in me to dwell on the poor advantages which I presume helped to make me so

formerly: such as I am, or rather, such as I was, I pleased your mother—greatly my superior in rank, though, unhappily for herself, alas! so much my inferior in years, that I ought to have considered her a child, when her artless, too ingenuous"—Mr. Willoughby stopped; his first modest embarrassment increasing to actual painfulness. Clarence looked up, when his father paused; but after an instantaneous glance at his face, respectfully withdrew his eyes, and fixed them upon the ground. His father, encouraged by the expression of his countenance, resumed in a more disengaged tone: "I have begun my story so ill, that it will be better to recommence it.—"Well, then, —our family is honorable and ancient, though none of my immediate relations are in the class of nobles. The paternal estate of our house was to devolve, of course, upon a brother elder than myself; and I, as the younger, after the ordinary mode of travelling for improvement, was

deemed fortunate in securing a place in the princely establishment of the Lord Montacute. This nobleman, his three brothers, and two sisters, were children of Sir Richard Pole, by Margaret Plantagenet, Countess of Salisbury; consequently they were grand-children to Lionel Duke of Clarence, and the royal blood in their veins entitled them to a princely state in their style of living. The situation I obtained under Lord Montacute was that of master of his horse, an honorable office, for which the younger sons of noblemen contended.

"I was preferred, my friends told me, before other candidates, because I had a tolerable figure, and was thought to look well on horse-back. Miserable distinctions, my dear son, if their possessor has no better ones! and more miserable the taste, which sought for them only in the man who was to become an inmate under the selector's roof!

"Four years passed after my admission

into the suite of Lord Montacute, when his youngest sister returned from France, where she had been learning from infancy those accomplishments thought necessary for persons of her sex and condition. In France, she formed a childish attachment to the beautiful Ann Boleyn, then in the train of the Dutchess d'Alençon; and this fancy, kept alive by the pretty letters of the unhappy lady, after her return to England, gradually strengthened into friendship, and continued even after she had become the wife of its king.

"Rosamond de la Pole was barely sixteen, your blameable father seven and twenty, when she took up her abode in her brother's family. Her widowed mother's aversion to the court and the new religion, as the doctrines of Luther and Calvin were then called, kept her remote from London: but, although equally hostile to the latter, Lord Montacute thought the family interest required him

che rish the partiality of the queen

for their young sister, and he, therefore, induced the countess to leave her in his hands. She was, therefore, placed under the eye of his wife, a lady totally incapable, from indolence and inattention, of so important a charge.

"Rosamond had no guide, no friend, except the youthful queen; and she, alas! had none of the qualities of either characters, except kind intentions. Imprudent as innocent, she was little likely to counsel discretion, or to awaken in her friend a sense of the danger which may follow the indulgence even of a virtuous affection: a girl of sixteen, with lively feelings, was then left solely to her own inexperienced heart.

"It was my fate to save Rosamond from instant death during a hawking party. The consequences of her fall, for it was an accident on horseback, made her for a long time dependant upon others for assistance in walking, or getting into her coach. From my rank in Lord Mon-

tacute's service, and my place at his table, I was always the person nearest at hand for such little offices, and they fell, therefore, to my share; — we were thrown too much together — we were left too much together: Lord Montacute had forgotten, that a gentleman of good blood and reputation does not easily see the actual difference between his condition and that of a great nobleman's sister; but I ought never to have lost sight of it — I was wrong, very, very wrong."

Mr. Willoughby sighed profoundly as he spoke, without venturing a look at his son: had he done so, too probably he might have read in that son's eyes, that one so fond of noble ancestry, could not think the fault unpardonable which had given him a mother of princely race. —"Go on, my dear father!" he said, breathlessly, pressing the hand he had unconsciously possessed himself of.

"I will not indulge myself," Mr. Willoughby resumed, "by describing your mo-

ther; suffice it, she would have been charming in my eyes had she been nameless and portionless, and indifferent to my slender merits; as it was, every thing conspired against my integrity. She was too young to know that, in this hard world, we must often contend against the blameless parts of our natures; her's was frank and sanguine, and enthusiastic, like your's, Clarence; and if she had wished it, she could not have concealed what was passing in her heart. That transparent countenance! I looked at it too often, not to know what its brightening changes meant. In short, I became sensible that she preferred me to the many nobles that sought her, and it cost me, therefore, the sharpest struggle I ever had with myself, to determine upon quitting Lord Montacute's service. My father was now dead, and my brother in such a languishing state of health that I could easily make both circumstances a plea for withdrawing into my native county. Shortly after my re-

moval there, I was surprized by receiving an appointment at court, obtained at the queen's suit, without my solicitation or knowledge. With that facile good nature, which afterwards became an instrument in the hands of her enemies, this indulgent friend lent herself to our loves, voluntarily procuring the situation which was to bring me again within the same sphere as that in which Rosamond moved.

"I had for a long time embraced the tenets of the Protestant religion, and the queen had the task of her young friend's conversion too much at heart, not to win her to it at last. Unknown to her bigotted family, Rosamond had become a Protestant.

"Our religion the same, our affections the same, my ties to Lord Montacute broken, my station in society elevated both by my place at court and the death of my brother, the dread of losing Rosamond by a threatened marriage, the kind

or conscientious persuasions of the queen herself who deprecated the evil of her dear proselyte's union with a Catholic, all united to precipitate me into the blameable step of wishing for a private marriage. Rosamond yielded; and we were married by Cranmer in the presence of the queen, and one other person. Almost immediately after this, the storm which had been gathering unsuspected over the thoughtless head of Ann Boleyn, suddenly descended: the King's jealousy burst forth the very morning she had sent in to him a request, praying for my appointment to a distinguished place about his person, with which she hoped to assuage the wounded pride of the de la Poles, when she should undertake the delicate office of reporting our secret marriage. With a heart too prophetic of her own dismal fate, and the ruin of all she favoured; magnanimously solicitous to save others, the poor queen not merely urged me to fly with my terrified Rosa-

mond to the continent, but exacted it as a proof of our affection and gratitude: with a heavy heart I obeyed. Her unhappy, unjust sentence, you know.

"Your mother and I passed four years upon the continent, wandering from place to place, sojourning nowhere; for although by pledging my land to a kinsman for life, I had obtained a sufficient provision for our handsome support in any country, I was too much afraid of the machinations of my enemies, to remain long enough where they might find and reach me."

"Yet you settled here?" observed Clarence in a voice of question.

"My son — the shaft was then shot." Mr. Willoughby, upon saying this, got up and walked to a window, where he staid till his voice had recovered its ordinary steadiness: he then returned and reseated himself.

"Our first children died in their cradles; you were born at Geneva.—I left my wife there, three months after that event,

for the purpose of withdrawing our money and jewels out of a merchant's hands in Holland, with whom I had placed them, and who was threatened with failure. The business ended satisfactorily, and I returned to find you, my Clarence; but, your mother ——"

"Was dead, I fear!" said Clarence, willing to finish the sad sentence for him.

"Not so, alas!" resumed Mr. Willoughby, making an effort to speak distinctly; "some of her bigotted and haughty kindred, were upon the watch for a moment like this fatal one. They gained access to her, alarmed her spiritual fears, revived in her the superstition of early years; spoke of Ann Boleyn's bloody end, of our children's deaths, of some most awful events in her own family, as judgments of an angry God; and, finally, wrought upon her strong sensibility so powerfully, that, partly by fear, partly by persuasion, they succeeded in inducing her to make, what she termed in her fare-

well letter to me, the voluntary surrender of her happiness in this world, for salvation in the next. Separation from her only child, the offspring of a heretic father, was deemed part of this bitter sin-offering; but events have since proved that you were left in your father's hands, only because — no matter why!" Mr. Willoughby hastily added, checking himself.

"Nay, nay, my father!" said Clarence, holding him firmly by the arm, as if afraid he would leave him, "I must implore you, since you have thus graciously volunteered to inform me of our family history, to keep nothing back." He paused a minute, then added in a choaking voice, and with a cheek like ashes, "Is my mother living then?"

Mr. Willoughby shook his head: it was not necessary for him to answer farther. Clarence looked down, and smothered a convulsive sigh. Mr. Willoughby returned to his narrative.

"Well, then, the event I allude to was

an attempt to steal you away—happily frustrated. Though I could not trace the authors of the attempt, I became persuaded that it was made by those who feared your interference with their claim on your mother's great fortune hereafter, and it comforted me too by the conviction that my poor Rosamond had refused to leave me comfortless; and that, consesequently, her kindred had recourse to this after-stratagem to possess themselves of your person, unknown to her. I will spare you the recital, Clarence, of what I suffered from the cruel, the unexpected blow of my wife's flight. I knew not whither she was gone, or had been taken: I could not seek her in England, for there I was well aware my life would be endangered from the suspicions left in the king's mind respecting his unfortunate queen's zeal in my service; and, joyless as my life was then just made to me, for your sake, Clarence, I desired to preserve it."

Clarence merely pressed his father's

hand, and looked up at him with eyes flooded almost to overflowing, with tears and gratefulness. Mr. Willoughly went on, more and more oppressed, as was evident from the frequent interruptions of his voice.

"The only course I could take, was to seek my Rosamond's best brother, the Cardinal, then resident in Italy. He received me with the urbanity and goodness which makes him so beloved by the good of all sects and parties — disavowed all share in the barbarous transaction—"

"He is dead, my father!" Clarence exclaimed, shocked the next instant at his abruptness. Mr. Willoughby changed colour, and after a short interval given to recovering from painful surprise, he enquired how long the Cardinal had been dead.

"He died on the same day with the Queen of England," answered his son; "when I heard the two pieces of intelligence, I little thought how nearly you would be interested in the last."

"An excellent man is gone," observed Mr. Willoughby, "one, whose candor, benevolence, and charity in its most extended sense, would have honored any creed! I knew him principally by reputation, for his peculiar line of study kept him abroad. When I sought him in my despair, the Cardinal could only bestow compassion upon me: rebuke, he forbore, for he saw I was a self-accusing man. Suffice it, my dear son, none of my efforts were availing to regain my wife; the act of quitting me was in a manner voluntary: she had entered into the bosom of her original church, and under the authority of her brothers, both of whom were intolerant to absolute hatred of any thing Protestant."

"I thought you mentioned three besides the Cardinal," observed Clarence, anxious to elicit any species of information about his family.

"There were four originally," replied Mr. Willoughby; "but death and dis-

honour had made dismal havoc in their house. Lord Montacute accused, and 'tis said convicted of treasonable practices against the king, was tried and executed, two years after my flight with his sister. Their mother, accused of similar treason, grounded on her antipathy to Protestanism, and her maternal ambition, was foully brought to the block by the same royal murderer. The Cardinal, suspected as the source of these practices, was sentenced to exile; while Geoffrey de la Pole, it is believed, preserved his head and his estate by having given private evidence against my former Lord. Arthur and his son are now the sole surviving males of that noble race; for Geoffrey died during the brief reign of Edward VI.; it is their enmity I dread, and the interested hostility of another powerful family.—To return, however, to the point I wandered from.

"Such awful events as those I have described, became mighty engines in the

hands of Rosamond's spiritual directors, and of her brother Geoffrey, who was anxious to acquire, by such means, a title to the hand of a lady belonging to the family I allude to. His denunciations and exhortations, agitated, afflicted, terrified her; and I suppose it was his sophistry made her believe the last act of her short life the only price by which she could purchase pardon for the sin of marrying me."

"And what was that act?" falteringly enquired Clarence, seeing his father stop in extreme anguish of spirit.

"I would fain conceal it from you," replied Mr. Willoughby, increasing in disorder. "I scarcely think I meant to have told you when I begun, but I have gone on unawares to this point, and you are so unhappily sensitive to ——"

"To what, dear Sir?" urged his son.

Mr. Willoughby stifled the word dishonor, and faintly articulated, "To whatever gives your father pain." Then, after a pause, "Rosamond's marriage with

me, was privately annulled by the Pope, her family being determined to insist that she was a Catholic at the time of our union; after this, she was induced, or frightened into — giving her hand to another; she married a Dudley."—

"Married!" Clarence repeated in astonishment, indignation, incredulity.

"It is too true," Mr. Willoughby faintly answered: Clarence was rendered speechless. His father was too familiar with all the changes of that expressive countenance, to be mistaken in the meaning of its present variations. He, therefore, hastened to moderate the feelings, which he well knew occasioned them, by saying, "Recollect your mother's extreme youth, my son, and the solemn events which her ghostly directors had it in their power to urge upon her distracted soul."

"I wish to remember nothing, but yourself!" interrupted Clarence, covering his face with his hands in bitterness of spirit.

"Do not say so, Clarence;" resumed Mr. Willoughby, yet more mildly, "a little reflection will make you think as I did, that your poor mother was either wrought into desperate recklessness of herself, by the terrifying representations of priests and fanatics, or benumbed by them into a sort of living death."

"Desperate recklessness!" repeated Clarence, shuddering, "my own impulses alarm me now! dearest father, I fear my character resembles my mother's far more than it does yours! how I wish it were otherwise!" Clarence fervently seized his father's hand as he spoke; and Mr. Willoughby, affected now to tears, or seizing the moment for indulging those excited by long-buried emotions, covered his face with his handkerchief.

Clarence would have had him defer the conclusion of this distressing conversation till another period, but Mr. Willoughby was anxious to get it over, and, acknowledging

relief from these salutary tears, took up his narrative again.—

"In less than eighteen months from the time your mother was torn from me, she was laid at rest for ever. During that time, she became the wife of Sir Everard Dudley, and the mother of another child: at the age of four and twenty, the grave closed over her — my business in life was then done, at least for many years. Friendships that might have been dear, and companionships that might have been pleasing under happier circumstances, were nothing to me after this: I gave them all up — but I had you, my boy, and what could I desire more?

"You must have some recollection of our vagrant mode of wandering from country to country; for, to own the truth, I was long tormented with the apprehension that you would be stolen from me at last, in despite of my cautious choice of Protestant places to dwell in, where the de la Pole influence could not extend. But

they relied on my quiescent character, I presume, and were doubtless so anxious to bury the whole affair in oblivion, that they ceased to stir in it. Very, very few persons, I believe, either in England or abroad, knew our history. The current report was, that I had fled my country in apprehension of being convicted of a criminal attachment to the queen; and the de la Poles took pains to keep up the report. After the death of Geoffrey, the one I dreaded most, chance conducted me to Roche Blanc; Providence, rather let me say, for I have been very happy in it."

"Happy! dear father!" Clarence spoke in a tone of penetrating pity and affection.

"Yes, Clarence, I have been very happy, thank God!" rejoined Mr. Willoughby, with a clearing countenance; "you know I am not of a nature to nurse sorrow, although I do not greatly affect society; my only serious care, has been

uneasiness to discover, whether I was right or wrong in determining to keep you unacquainted with those agitating particulars, unless the events that have happened, should blessedly occur. I mean the death of Queen Mary, and the accession of Elizabeth, which you tell me is certain; these events make my return to England safe and expedient."

"Pardon me, dearest Sir!" interrupted Clarence, "I do not see why you should return there. England must be full of miserable recollections to you; you say that there is nothing there you particularly regard, except the mere tombs of what you once loved! — at Roche Blanc you have living friends at least; you say you have been happy here: why then, should you leave it?"

"For your sake, Clarence."

"For mine, my father!—O, if that is all your motive, give it up at once. I can have no great interest in a country I never saw, and where I have no possession."

"But I hope to regain a great deal for you, returned his father. "It was not in my power to sell the right of enjoying our paternal estate for a longer time than that of my own life. My kinsman made the purchase with that knowledge: had my son, after my death, remained in exile, and a Catholic prince still held rule in England, that relation would most probably have been secured in it for perpetuity; but it has pleased Heaven to order things otherwise; and I go."

"Not to take back this property, in the name of God, dear father!" interrupted Clarence, breathless with honorable apprehension.

"Certainly not, Clarence!" replied his father. "I hope my own conscience would make such a thing impossible if it were otherwise possible; but it is not so, the property will remain in my cousin's hands, until I die; all my business now is to substantiate your right to it after I am gone."

"I see not why that is necessary," Clarence said with his usual artlessness, "I am your son, nobody will dispute that; and so if I *am* to contemplate the sorrow of surviving you, and should ever care to reclaim this property, it is mine of course. But I really think, if this cousin of ours has children, brought up in the expectation of inheriting their father's reputed state, I should never have the heart to take it from them."

"My generous boy! my excellent Clarence!" exclaimed his father, warmly folding him in his arms, "how little you still know of the world! we will not argue the point just now, it will be time enough to talk to you hereafter of *your* children's rights, and that a bargain thoroughly understood by both parties, and willingly agreed to, is equally obligatory upon both, for literal fulfilment. At present, I'll set your mind at ease by telling you my cousin is a bachelor, and not inclined to become otherwise."

"Still I ask, dearest Sir, why must you go to England to afflict yourself? shall I go there alone?—can I act in your stead, if you wish any thing done?"

Mr. Willoughby's face clouded again. "Clarence, why will you wring out of me, what will pain you?—Your mother's second marriage, and the gloss her relations gave to certain circumstances, make it possible for persons, whose interest it may be to do so, to question your legitimacy. The fact of her having entered into the communion of my church, at the period of our marriage, they deny; consequently, our marriage ceremony, performed solely by a Protestant divine, is null to Catholics. Her fortune going, therefore, to her daughter by a second husband, becomes an object of contention, especially as it has been greatly increased by the magnificent legacy of a sponsor. For your mother's fortune, you will perhaps say you care not; be it so:—but you will observe, that if she and I were not indeed legally

man and wife, you cease to be my natural heir, and you are then left ——"

"Without home, rank, or country!" interrupted Clarence, starting from his seat, with a face of crimson.

Mr. Willoughby hastened to allay the acute pain he had unwillingly inflicted, by assuring his son that he had no doubt of establishing the fact of Rosamond's conversion to the same faith with his own, by letters in his possession, from herself and the queen, distinctly stating the fact, and the circumstances of it; and by the testimony of the only person who witnessed their marriage, and was still living, and who could at once testify to the marriage and the sacrament having been previously administered under the same form to the bride and bridegroom, as a pledge of their spiritual union. As these circumstances, if proved, must necessarily restore Clarence's natural right to his mother's property, and render his half-sister illegitimate; Mr. Willoughby

said he had the powerful family of Dudley to contend with, now more powerful than that of the de la Poles, when he should go to England, and supplicate a hearing from the new queen. The de la Poles, though Catholics, were her near relations, and Clarence had himself informed his father, that one of the Dudleys, the insinuating Lord Robert, was already suspected to be the person destined to share Elizabeth's throne. Thus success was doubtful; Mr. Willoughby was, however, willing to believe that regard for the friends of her unfortunate mother, the justice of the cause itself, and the promising youth of his son, might operate against other influence. "It was now," he said, "that the Prince de Condé's friendship might be of essential service, since his protection of the religion for which Elizabeth had endured so much, would authorize him to solicit from that just princess at least a hearing of Mr. Willoughby's claims."

Clarence now understood that his father had given the prince the heads of his son's rights, when he saw him alone at Nerac, and that Condé had then expressed himself convinced of them. Mr. Willoughby insisted upon this, by way of moderating that apprehension of dishonor, which he feared would take possession of his son's mind. He was agreeably surprised by Clarence's exclaiming, after a long and pondering silence, "Well! I can make up my mind to unjust obloquy; — this has given me a momentary shock; but since my mother was virtuous, though imprudent, (afterwards, alas! deplorably blameable); I need not blush to own myself her son. I am your lawful son, dear Sir, and such I will assert myself, such I will bear myself, let who will bar my way to my rights. — And now, this sister of mine; am I to think of her as a sister? Dearest father, how all that you have told me, has confused and confounded my faculties! It has opened such

different prospects to me, from what I have hitherto been looking at — it has shown me such a strange contradictory view of human nature, that I confess I scarcely feel in my waking senses. I cannot get over the idea of my mother having married a second time, and being now, where I can never hope to learn from her some blessed extenuation! — I wish — I wish, I had not asked for this part of your history, dear father; for I think I shall never again be as happy and thoughtless as I have been."

Mr. Willoughby, with his habitual indulgence, said something intended to divert his son's mind from too serious a contemplation of the subjects they had been discussing; but observing how closely he continued adhering to it, he became strengthened in a foregone purpose of not making Clarence the companion of his journey to England.

He dreaded the effect which mortification respecting his disputed claim to

legitimacy, and probably ultimate disappointment might have upon him: the fire of his spirit, and the quickness of his sensibility, might involve him in dangerous quarrels with those whose policy it might be to render him obnoxious to censure at the court of Elizabeth, and thus frustrate his father's attempt at seeking her favor. A premature life of hopes and fears, of worldly calculations, of suing, and conciliating, and forbearing, might, if it did not actually tarnish the integrity of his character, diminish much of its energy, and take away all its happy confidence in his fate and fellow-creatures.

So to blight his son's youth, was impossible to Mr. Willoughby; and determining, therefore, to breast every difficulty alone, this affectionate father, to whom exertion of every kind was disagreeable, voluntarily prepared to encounter a long season of mental harrassment and bodily fatigue, in the sole desire of sparing them to his son,

It was in vain that Clarence, through the whole of that day, tried at intervals to resume this part of their conversation, and extort more reasons, than the few his father chose to give, for their meditated separation. For once Mr. Willoughby was resolute and impenetrable; and after much consultation and amicable argumentation, it was finally determined that the father and son should set out, in a short time, for whatever place the Prince de Condé was likely to be found at; there Mr. Willoughby hoped to receive counsel from the prince, and be permitted to leave Clarence under the care of his friend the Chevalier de Bourbon. This line of conduct once resolved upon, Mr. Willoughby would not permit either himself or Clarence to dwell too frequently or too long upon a subject of such painful interest to both; but called on him the next morning, immediately after their lingering breakfast, to walk over the woods of

L'étoile and look at the improvements he had attempted during his absence.

At another time it might have been a great effort for one so young and headlong in all his feelings as Clarence, thus to have left the prime subject of his thoughts, for objects comparatively insignificant; but at present he was ready to merge every thing in the pleasure of being again at home, by the side of that father whom he never dreamed he loved so dearly as he did, until they were separated, and his ever-present kindness missed. Rallying his spirits, therefore, and searching out enlivening topics of conversation, he soon succeeded in reviving the spirit of joy between them.

From the garden, Clarence descended, with the facility of early habits, those wintry paths, which even Mr. Willoughby but slowly and cautiously compassed; and landing his father at the gate of chateau Roche Blanc, by way of resting place, while his walk was ex-

tended much farther; he hastened on to make the tour of cabins, and farms, and mountain sheds: to enquire after those that had, and those that had not been at the rural feast at L'étoile; to kiss children and old women; shake hands with the young peasants; and leave tokens of his kindly remembrance in many a grateful house.

By the time he got back, his father had intentionally smoothed the brow of Madame de Roche Blanc, by mentioning the probability of his son's departure with him for Paris, and possibly for England, in the course of a week. Such a probability rendered any apprehensions about him and Aigline wholly unnecessary; and willing to conciliate her obliging neighbour before his departure, that she might secure a continuance during his absence of the many agreeable privileges he was in the habit of granting her at L'étoile, she received Clarence with unusual graciousness.

Disappointed of seeing the master of the chateau, in the fulness of his joyful heart Clarence actually lamented the absence of the baron: he would not willingly have spared a single stone or tree from the place; much less a human being. He could think now of La Marot's absurdities, as mere incitements to mirth, and pardon even his impertinences as entertaining traits of character. He talked of him, therefore, with an affectionateness which surprised Aigline, who had been accustomed to hear and reprove his frequent complaints of her step-father's wearisomeness and frivolity. But Aigline had never experienced in her own person, the endearing effect of separation from every-day objects.

Happily for Clarence, he came provided with a bunch of hoarded raisins, which had been pressed on him by a village dame, and which he now transferred to Cecile. This accidental attention to her favourite, completed the conquest of

Madame de Roche Blanc's ill-humour, so that she did not frown, when taking this little girl by the hand, and admiring her curling locks, he invited Aigline to show him some of their old haunts in the garden.

Enchanted to find herself once more by the early playmate, with whom her taste and feelings always harmonized, and from whom she expected so much to delight and interest her, Aigline obeyed the summons with alacrity; and although the trees under which they walked were now leafless, and the river which bounded their path no longer murmuring sweet music, these early friends found the garden as charming as ever.

Clarence talked of the Chevalier de Bourbon, described his person, his manners, his peculiar turn of mind; spoke with enthusiasm of the Prince de Condé; with regret of the interesting d'Enghien: now beguiled Aigline of her tears, now animated her into smiles. Painting, as

he did, with a vivid pencil, all the comic and all the tragic scenes he had passed through since they had parted, all the variety of characters and varied habits of life he had seen or adopted, all the feelings those different circumstances had occasioned him; he proved himself still the same delightful Clarence, whose society used to be her holiday, whose affection her happiness.

Neither of these friends were inclined to trouble present enjoyments by too anxious a scrutiny of the future: so that when Clarence waved a direct answer to Aigline's question, whether it were really true that he was so soon going away again, she refrained from re-urging it; gladly listening to his pleasurable account of old Godefroi's reception, when he called on the old man in his way through Lourdes.

So occupied, and so interested, they were not soon weary of their loitering walk about the rambling, leafless garden of the

chateau; but Cecile, after exhausting the amusement of arranging and disarranging all the flower-pots in the greenhouse, was not to be coaxed into relishing a cold saunter in the open air. She tormented them to go in; till at length Aigline, accusing Clarence of his old tyranny over her actions, refused to be detained any longer from her duty within doors, and ran away with Cecile. Clarence was not long in following.

Much time was not given the inhabitants of Roche Blanc for the enjoyment of their young neighbour's return. Mr. Willoughby said little about his early departure and probable length of absence; though he quietly prepared for it: arranging with his steward for the moderate keeping up of L'étoile during his absence, fixing the number of servants that were to be dismissed, with a year's wages to recompence them for the hastiness of their dismissions, and providing for the support of the few aged poor that had

hitherto been fed from his charitable kitchen.

Anthony of Navarre, disgusted at the neglect of his interests, shown by the French king in his treaty with Spain, had, indeed, quitted Paris in resentment, and withdrawn to Gascony: thither, however, it was now ascertained by Clarence that neither Condé nor Adhemar de Bourbon were coming. They remained in Paris, to assist at the nuptials of the princesses. To the capital, therefore, Clarence and his father purposed proceeding immediately.

Mr. Willoughby had one strong motive for wishing to depart quickly; he dreaded the return of the baron from his foolish expedition to Bourdeaux, aware that he would either fasten on him some preposterous commission to be executed with expence or inconvenience in Paris or London; or that he might more seriously annoy him, by the request of that pecuniary assistance which Mr. Willoughby had so often afforded him in

defiance of his better reason; an assistance which now, with so many calls upon his own settled income, he could no longer spare.

Clarence was, perhaps, as eager to depart as his father; although his affectionate pleasure in Aigline's society, and the mere joy of being at home, was vivid to a degree which surprized himself: but the history of his father's youth was too closely connected with his own honour and happiness in after life, and too affecting, as it regarded that dear parent himself, not to occupy a son's thoughts, nearly to the exclusion of every other subject.

When Clarence thought of his mother, it was less with tenderness, than with a sort of stinging grief, very different from what he wished he could have felt for her memory. In spite of his father's partial mode of describing her, Clarence could not fail to discern, that she had been careless of those inward feelings, beyond the

modest measure of woman's frankness; that she had thus tempted Mr. Willougby to love her, and then harassed his kind, self-sacrificing nature, into compliance with her more imperious passions. Fondly attached she must have been, but it was evident that she was selfish. The latest acts of her life proved this. —For had not self been dearer to Mrs. Willoughby than the consideration of her husband's fate, whom she had drawn into error and exile; if it had not been dearer than the infant to whom she had given birth, would she have left the one to disgrace, and the other to despair, even for the sake of absolution from all her sins?

Thus argued Clarence, who, brought up in principles which happily make the performance of our duties necessary for salvation—principles, which go to no human oracle for their rule of action, could not sufficiently enter into the feelings of a being differently instructed,

whose religion taught her, in this instance, that the more suffering she inflicted upon the objects of her supposed guilty idolatry, the more perfect would be her expiation.

Clarence had no recollection of his mother, to counterbalance the lively gratitude and poignant pity with which he considered his deserted father; bitterness, therefore, in such an ardent heart as his, was more likely to be the fruit of his musings about the parent that had left him in his cradle, than any softer sentiment. That resentment which was purely on his own account, he did not allow himself to cherish, and after the first shock of hearing that his legal title, even to the name of his father, might be disputed, he recovered composure, from the conviction that he *had* a right to it.

Clarence could have made himself happy with conscious integrity alone, had circumstances rendered his worth suspected: it was not difficult for him, therefore, to be contented, under a pos-

sible questioning of his legitimacy, when his father had satisfied him that he was the offspring of just and honourable marriage.

In this conviction, Clarence had the advantage of his friend de Bourbon, for whose proud yet pitiable destiny on this point, he would not have exchanged his own. Struck with so singular a coincidence in their fates, he recalled a remark or two of the Chevalier's, which had appeared obscure at the time it was uttered; but which he now comprehended must have had reference to his knowledge of Mr. Willoughby's situation, and his son's connection with the princely house of de la Pole.

Clarence would not allow himself to think, that if the Prince de Condé had indeed given Adhemar part of Mr. Willoughby's brief confidence on this subject, his more open friendship for his young *eléve* was less romantic than the latter had flattered himself: Clarence was still

young enough to set too high a value upon that total disregard of worldly considerations, and established usages, which is not often the concomitant of riper years, when forming intimacies: and if he erred in doing so, it was the error of a noble and a generous soul.

CHAP. II.

It cost Mr. Willoughby a very sharp pang when he took leave of Aigline. As he folded her in a fatherly embrace, her animating attentions to him during his period of solitude, were warm at his bosom. He secretly wished that Clarence's future partner through life might resemble her; for it would have been folly to wish her that partner herself. His son's destiny Mr. Willoughby knew would in all probability, be either too brilliant, or too clouded for her to share. She was well born indeed, but unfriended by those whose relationship gave her distinction: she was portionless; and she was linked to the desperate fortunes of a

scheming, ruinous step-father. Thus, if Clarence were at once allowed his right place in society, that would fix him where gayer images, and more ambitious prospects would tempt him to climb yet higher: and if he were cruelly shut out from his inheritance, Mr. Willoughby thought he knew him well enough to be justified in believing, that abjuring tenderer ties, and domestic comforts, he would devote himself to the service of his illustrious friends in France, and under their banner, try to make his country ashamed of having rejected him.

Provided with suitable remembrances for every individual of Madame de Roche Blanc's family, including her absent husband and son, Mr. Willoughby bade them all farewell; with outward composure, but with that inward melancholy, perhaps inseparable from advancing life, when he that fancies himself entering its latest stages, bids adieu to scenes and

persons, whom he would fain be assured he shall behold again.

The tears Aigline shed, as she hung upon his tremulous hand with kisses and blessings, were the first deeply-afflicted ones she had ever known: many had she shed in the temporary bitterness, or fainter sadness, occasioned by the repulsiveness of her mother: many more in sympathy with distressed villagers,—but none, none like the present. Mr. Willoughby was going beyond sea, and that idea seemed so distinctly to mark the distance he would be removed to, and had so much danger coupled with it, that she wept over its necessity.

"And not a tear for me, Aigline?" asked Clarence, with frank and kind reproach, even more solicitous to draw her attention from his oppressed father, than to attract it to himself.

"Not many, dear Clarence!" she answered as frankly, her eyes smiling through their dewy fringes, though some-

what mournfully. "You are only going to Paris; and you will be coming back to L'étoile, you tell us; and I have not been with you, every day of my life, for the last two years, as I have been with dear Mr. Willoughby!"

"You are quite right, Aigline;" returned Clarence, most affectionately regarding her; "I admit that you lose a great deal in my dear father: but cheer up! — I will send you news of my father whenever I can, and we will both come back and feast as merrily at L'étoile, as I caught you all doing, when you fancied me fairly out of the way at the wars."

This allusion to that happy moment, so gaily uttered, turned the tide of their feelings; every one smiled; and a more cheerful strain of predictions and remembrances, of hopes and confidences then followed.

Madame la Baronne was earnestly intreated to honor L'étoile with receiving from it, during Mr. Willoughby's absence, more than her usual supply of delicacies,

which his good housekeeper would always have a pride in tendering: and Aigline was admonished to visit its groves and its pastures, to see that her friend's favourite haunts and favourite flowers were preserved against their return, and to remind the servants of their duty to their master's pensioners, whether superannuated animals, or superannuated labourers.

Early the next morning, Mr. Willoughby and his son departed privately, to spare the former the painful gratification of seeing how much he would be regretted in Roche Blanc: and Aigline rose from the pillow where she had wept away the whole night, afflicted beyond her own comprehension or indulgence, to resume those joyless duties which neither the characters nor the conduct of her relations quickened with any principle of life.

She had fancied the bitterest moments past after parting from her friends; but

she had to learn, from every succeeding day's and hour's experience, that the momentary anguish of saying farewell to a valued person, is not to be compared with the desolate feeling of missing them at every turn, and in every exigency.

In comparison with the one that stays, the friend that goes is little to be pitied; however vivid may be their regret, or their affection. They go to new scenes, consequently to new impressions, which must distract, if not amuse their grief; but the wretch that remains, is left walking among the groves of departed joys, trying in vain to believe, that any of those buried joys are to revive for them.

Days, weeks, passed for Aigline, without one instant's companionship with the kindly heart she had resorted to so long for comfort, and for the joy of giving comfort. She went out, and she no where encountered the excellent Mr. Willoughby in his visits of friendship or be-

nevolence. She no longer caught the gladdening sight of his face, as looking up from her work she saw him riding past the chateau. She went to L'étoile, and there, also, she sought its master in vain. Every spot was full of his memorials; every echo seemed waiting for his voice; but that voice was no longer heard. Her heart sunk under the weight of these convictions, and she would often weep with melancholy foreboding, that she should soon need the tender friendship she deplored.

Hitherto Aigline had lived cheerfully, if not absolutely happy. Little called upon for sympathy with any species of sorrow from the narrowness of her circle; and disregarding, except for moments, the mixed frost and gloom of her immediate home: she had relished all that she did enjoy, with such lively and thoughtless transport, that she was inclined to believe herself not gifted or afflicted with too much feeling. But sorrowfully

did she now learn, that, in proportion to our vivid enjoyment of happiness, is our keen sense of its loss; and that a gay temper and profound feelings are often united in the same person.

The poor girl's sensibility had burst its flood-gates, desolating all before and around it: yet as it had never been suspected till now, either by herself or her family, her incapacity to command its torrent, was a new cause of grief to her, and of angry astonishment to her mother.

After the first ordinary expressions of regret at the loss of an excellent neighbour, and a few conjectures as to Mr. Willoughby's reasons for going, the Baroness ceased to mention him, except accidentally; and that as carelessly as though he still lived within a walk's distance. Continuing to receive all that she had been accustomed to have from L'étoile, and becoming every day less inclined to thwart her own particular humour, she

was not sorry to be relieved from the occasional toil of entertaining a person to whom she was so infinitely obliged. Of these substantial benefits which her gradually-submitted spirit had frequently stooped to accept at different periods from him, she thought only at the time they were wanted; at present, other cares occupied her.

Shortly after Mr. Willoughby's departure, Madame de Roche Blanc had a serious illness, which, though she recovered from it, shook her constitution to its foundations. Aigline's unremitting attendance upon her, and watchful care of Cecile, whose sickly state and froward habits required both patience and tenderness, evidently made an impression upon this hard parent, for she spoke to her daughter with more kindness than she had ever done, and seemed to have especial pleasure in repeating, "Well; if I die, I think you will not disappoint me, Aigline; you will continue to be a

mother to Cecile — you will do your duty by her."

Aigline was thus accustomed to make abiding with her family, an article of her creed; and too much touched by her mother's dawning kindness, and too desirous of giving that suffering mother all the solace in her power, to think of her own future feelings, she never for a moment disputed the justice of Madame de Roche Blanc's expectations.

A painful oppression at her heart, for which she knew not completely how to account, appeared to have taken from her all the energy and buoyancy natural to her character, and all her hopes in days to come. The best half of her being, seemed to have gone with Mr. Willoughby and his son; and although her mother received a letter from the former after his arrival in Paris, written cheerfully and cordially, with a post. script by Clarence, positively fixing the time for his revisiting L'étoile, directly

after the court marriages then in prospect, Aigline could not recover her relish for customary enjoyments. A shade of frequent sadness, therefore, crossed her beautiful eyes from this period, giving interest to their beauty, and rendering their occasional sunniness more remarkable and more covetted.

With these shaded looks, she was first seen by a stranger of good mien and countenance, who accompanied the Baron home from Bourdeaux, for the avowed purpose of seeking health at the baths of St. Sauveur.

The Abbé de Fontevraud had been travelling six years in Italy, where he had forgotten the probable effects of malaria upon a frame inadequate to the pursuits of the spirit it clothed. His zealous search after undiscovered antiquities, and his laborious investigation of such as were already known, had nearly cost him his life, when an imperious recall to France tore him from the objects of his intellec-

tual passion. He was recommended to make the voyage by sea; but, either sick or weary, landed half way at Bourdeaux, he encountered the Baron de Roche Blanc; was, as the Baron gravely and privately assured his family, instantaneously struck with his *virtu* and erudition; and, with very little persuasion, was induced to follow his advice, of trying the waters in their neighbourhood, and making a hotel of the chateau until he could settle himself at St. Sauveur.

If the Baron's report were true, it must be confessed that the classic Abbé was given to first-sight fancies of a very different description; for, upon the entrance of Aigline, his dark grey eyes lighted up with evident admiration — he seemed never weary of surveying her; and he attached himself to her side almost solely: obviously anxious to discover whether her heart and mind kept the charming promise of her countenance.

Aigline, silent when not in spirits, and sad when not gay, for gaiety was her natural state, did not appear to great advantage. The fluttering stir made by the Baron to impress the stranger with a due sense of his consequence and talents; the regular parading of plausible nothings in the shape of his own productions, and frivolous curiosities; the mixed coldness and forced civility of her mother; each of these circumstances, by marking the first stage of their new acquaintance, reminded her only the more forcibly of an old one: of those dear, absent friends, whose sanctuary seemed now to be her heart.

Tears came into her eyes more than once, from such recollections; and once she thought this perseveringly-observing stranger, noticed them; for shortly afterwards he asked some questions about Mr. Willoughby and his son, at whose names, lightly mentioned by her step-father, Aigline's cheek had suffused visibly. There was nothing, however, in Monsieur

de Fontevraud said, offensive, or impertinent: indeed he seemed to regard Aigline with more interest than at first, after seeing her emotion; so that she was at last won upon by his manner and novel conversation, to recant the unfavourable opinion she had formed of a man, who could be the dupe of the Baron de Roche Blanc's pretensions to sense and sensibility.

Happily for the Abbé's wish to please, he had a prepossessing voice; and its silver tones acted like music upon Aigline's prejudices. Fontevraud did not talk much, but he talked well; and his eyes were never silent. Even when fixed upon the ground, and they were often cast down in thought or modesty, they seemed to those familiar with them, still pregnant with expression. So profound was the impression they left upon the memory.

The rest of the Abbé's face was not remarkable for any peculiarity; it was

merely pale and composed; corresponding with the character of his figure, which though rather elegantly proportioned, was obviously that of an invalid and a student.

Fontevraud seemed to be about two or three and thirty, and he talked like a man of easy fortune and untrammelled condition. Aigline was surprized to find how this stranger grew upon her liking in the course of a single evening; and how much more so, during the week he lingered on, from day to day, at the chateau. The interest she took in his society, was of a very different sort from that inspired by Mr. Willoughby and Clarence; it was purely that of the mind; for he evidently delighted in informing and expanding her's. Fontevraud's studies had lain in a completely different track from the desultory and imperfect ones of Clarence; and when he had Aigline by his side, he seemed irresistibly impelled to make her the sharer

of his thoughts, however foreign they might be supposed from her habits of speculation. He, therefore, interested her insensibly, in new subjects; carried her in imagination to the classic groves of Athens, and the august temples of Rome; awakened her to a just conception of the taste, genius, and stern virtues of those wondrous people; and translated for her the finest passages of their purest poets.

Aigline listened with pleasure, and learned with satisfaction. But romance and Clarence were *the first loves* of her mind; and from the most touching, most beautiful passages, even of the matchless Euripides, she would turn to the antique chronicle of the Cid, and read with more abundant tears, tears due to old associations, that part, where his favorite horse is led in to the death-bed of the warrior; where, "*avec ses grands yeux il reste là, muet, immobile comme un agneau. Son maître ne peut plus lui parler, et lui non plus ne peut point parler à son maître!*"

From the classical illustrations and polished periods of Fontevraud, Aigline's thoughts turned to the wild and fresher luxuriance of her early companion's genius — that genius, existing unknown to itself, and beautiful in its very lawlessness. — The more her own spirit saddened, and her own habits of reflection increased, the more did she cherish and prize the remembrance of his blissful temper. Her spirits were, indeed, saddening in spite of herself, from an accumulation of painful impressions which nothing counteracted. L'étoile was now but the sepulchre of the regretted past: she met its mocking spectre, in those deserted groves; the reality of joy, no more!

To her mother's habitual peevishness of temper, was added infirm health, and brooding despondency; and although, after a week's residence at the chateau, the Abbé Fontevraud had removed himself to St. Sauveur, Aigline saw that his frequent visits to Roche Blanc, regularly

occasioned dissension between her mother and the Baron. She guessed not, that she herself was the prime cause of their altercations; and that Madame de Roche Blanc's patience was exhausted with fruitless endeavours to open her husband's eyes to the mischief which might accrue to them all, were this stranger to profess himself Aigline's lover.

It is true that Monsieur de Fontevraud was in the path to the priesthood; but, like many other Abbé's, he might use the privilege, always open to that class, of relinquishing clerical honors, and prefer a life of domestic ties to the hope of the Papal crown itself. Madame de Roche Blanc called upon her husband to remember, how often this otherwise-uncommunicative stranger had of late spoken of his father's desire to have him relinquish a profession obliging him to celibacy, and how often he had expressed himself as if inclined to yield to so tempting a request. She smiled disdainfully when her

Lord assured her that he had as often heard the Abbé declare his vocation was not for the Fathers, but for the classic writers of ancient Greece, and that consequently he might be inclined to obey his father's wishes in one point, without intending to concede to them all. She still maintained that this distinct explanation of his power to marry, if he chose to do so, had only been made since his admiration of Aigline had become apparent to every one.

The Baron, who never would see any thing in a light foreign to his own fancies, was not to be persuaded, that whoever might marry Aigline, would assuredly discover the disgraceful secret of her property having been unfairly made away with; and that so far, therefore, from Aigline continuing the friend of her family, she might, in reality, cause their ruin, by insisting upon the restitution of this wasted fortune.

Madame de Roche Blanc, while she

repeated this, did it with greater asperity from the sentiment of remorse which now began to torment her in addition to that of shame. The Baron answered her representations with perfect *sang froid* and good humour; persisting in the provoking declaration, that he was ready to acknowledge the debt at any time; and to pay back the sum thus obtained, unluckily lost by the villainy of the fellow his unsuspecting nature trusted, whenever that money came into his hand which he expected at the demise of his aunt, and which his dear Baroness knew he destined for the provision of their younger children. At this point, Madame de Roche Blanc's compunction stopt; and soothing her conscience by a belief that a provision was more necessary for a sickly, spoiled child, than for an amiable young creature, fitted to fulfil the kindest and tenderest duties of life, she ceased to urge the subject upon her husband,

Unsuccessful with him, she then tried to avert the dreaded evil of her own disgrace, by studied coldness to the Abbé's evident purpose, and by providing more occupation than ever for the employment of Aigline's time. She even descended to the meanness of throwing out hints of what she really disbelieved herself, a suspected attachment between her daughter and the absent Clarence Willoughby.

The Abbé, however, was not to be distanced: he either saw through the meaning of these private hints; or he did not fear to enter the lists with an inexperienced young man; or he was determined to conquer by his openness, the respect, at least, of Aigline's mother. He never came to the chateau without asking for Aigline: yet he honorably abstained from seeking her in her solitary moments; content to engage her attention when accident placed him beside her in a walk, or in a room with others. Aigline observed with some surprise, that

so far from relishing the bombast of her step-father, the Abbé obviously had taken a sudden and strong disgust to him as well as to her mother; for his downward look, that had at first merely expressed contemptuous compassion of the one, and determined endurance of the other, had of late evidenced the strongest dislike to both.

Yet the Abbé continued to visit Roche Blanc; and when he did come, there was such deep interest in his address to her, such almost penetrating tenderness in his intellectual eyes, such solicitude to make her talk of her own feelings, and of her absent friends, that it was impossible even for the unpractised Aigline not to be struck with it.

The wife of the village pastor, taciturn as she used to be at L'étoile, could not keep silence now. A love-affair, in this secluded valley, was an event more memorable than the appearance of a comet, and several minute enquiries about

M'amselle de Vanzéles' fortune, connections, admirers, &c. cautiously put by the Abbé to this simple personage, had opened her eyes to his serious intentions respecting her young neighbour. She, therefore, did not hesitate to repeat every one of his questions to the unconscious object of them, who might not have liked her lover the better for it, had she not perceived, with a faint throb of grateful pleasure, (for who does not wish to be loved for themselves, even by those they desire not to encourage!) that Fontevraud's manner was more touchingly tender than before.

This observation, after the first flattered feeling, caused Aigline no livelier emotion than concern: anxious solely not to encourage him, or excite her mother's displeasure, she saw the propriety of avoiding the Abbé; and she did avoid him as often, though as delicately, as possible.

Fontevraud was not long of perceiving

this change in her conduct, and the effect of it was shortly visible. He surprised the family at the chateau one morning at a very early hour; and, without preface, announced that his visit was to take leave.

After making the ordinary compliments, upon such occasions, to the lady of the mansion, and thanking the Baron more cordially for his frequent hospitality, he turned to Aigline. That look of emotion, which occasionally disturbed the studious thoughtfulness of his features, now spoke to her tremulous sensibility; but, instead of making any covert appeal to pity or tenderness, he simply told her that he was going through Paris, and would with pleasure take charge of any commission to her friends there.

The glow, which any allusion to her dearest, her only friends, always caused in Aigline's heart, now shone through her cheek; while trembling, irresolute, doubtful, and anxious, she looked towards

her mother, to know how she might answer this.

"O, send a message to our good friends," said the Baroness, secretly hoping that jealous vexation might at once extinguish any tender purpose of the Abbé's. "If you will do us the favor," she added, turning to Fontevraud, "to ask for the Chevalier Willoughby, at the Prince de Condé's, and give him news of us, it will oblige us all."

"And pray tell him," exclaimed Aigline, eagerly, "how we long to hear again of dear Mr. Willoughby: tell him that every thing goes on well at L'étoile, except his favorite ash-tree, by the water-mill, and that was blown down in the last storm."

"But if I am not commissioned to say, that he is uprooted himself from the memories he must joy to dwell in," observed the Abbé, with an equivocal smile, "I presume the Chevalier Willoughby will not hear this piece of news with great dismay?"

"Ah! he will never be uprooted from our hearts," exclaimed Aigline, with artless fervor. "Don't you know that I always look on Clarence Willoughby as a brother?"

"That exclamation is his eulogium," resumed the Abbé, with an air of satisfaction. "If I am so fortunate as to see the Chevalier Willoughby, I may hope to renew the acquaintance this commission will enable me to make; for *I* hope to revisit Roche Blanc at the time I am told this young soldier is expected."

"Indeed!" said the Baroness.

"I am going now," continued the Abbé, disregarding her vexed tone, "to acquit myself of a duty too long delayed,—I am going home: when we meet again, dear Ma'mselle, (he addressed himself to Aigline,) I hope it may be to claim"—he stopt abruptly, but his sparkling eyes, Madame de Roche Blanc thought, finished the sentence only too presumptuously and too clearly. She darted an angry glance at her daughter,

whose embarrassed answer to Fontevraud, was happily drowned in the cataract of compliment and concern, with which the Baron overflowed at this intimation of his new friend's return, given at the moment of parting.

The Abbé did not prolong his visit; he bowed to the Baron, and upon the hands of the ladies. Aigline's he raised to his lips. Had it not been for the direful, nameless apprehension, excited by his last words, her countenance would have expressed the regard and regret she really felt; but, for his smile of hope, she returned only a distressed look, immediately withdrew, and the moment he was gone, ran to busy herself with a hundred useful trifles, to ward off a probable lecture from her mother, accusing her of silly or forward conduct, in consequence of Fontevraud's evident satisfaction.

The departure, and probable intentions of the Abbé, were, however, not long a

subject either of discussion between the Baron and Baroness, or of unpleasant meditation to Aigline: new events started up, to claim and absorb attention.

An express from Languedoc, roused the chateau at day-break one morning; and immediately afterwards Aigline saw her father and mother prepare to set off for the residence of her sister. She could only learn, from her mother's half-muttered answers to the few questions she hazarded, that Lolótte was not the object of all this hurry and dispatch.

The Baron more communicative, and in the highest glee, volubly informed Aigline, that his aunt with whom Lolótte lived, was now dying; that he looked for a superb inheritance; and that, if his hopes were realized, his *charmante* Aigline should have a *dot* and a husband into the bargain, in spite of sour tempers and narrow souls!

Madame de Roche Blanc's glance at this insinuation, might have killed any

other man than her thoughtless husband, who was insensible to it; for he spoke what he meant, though his kindness was perhaps worth no more than her hardness. He had spent Aigline's fortune, with as little heed or principle as he would have given her one: it was ever indifferent to him how he came by money, or how he got rid of it; shallow ostentation, vanity that had not ingenuity enough to provide for more than the triumph of the existing moment, and complete callousness to shame, rendering him more agreeable in his unjustifiable acts than his wife, but scarcely more respectable. — With the air of one going to a wedding rather than to a death-bed, he handed his disturbed lady into the lumbering vehicle used on these occasions, while she repeated again and again to Aigline, instructions how to manage and amuse Cecile during her absence; then drawing a troubled sigh, drew back into the carriage.

The absence of this ill-assorted pair, continued nearly a fortnight: the journey to and fro in their way of travelling, consumed some days of this time, and Aigline was aware that whether the Baron's kinswoman lived or died, they must be detained there longer than ordinary. The time, however, appeared long to her; for she was anxious to hear of poor Lolótte, and she had promised sueh incessant watchfulness over the fractious Cecile, that it amounted almost to imprisonment of herself.

Aigline had been told not to suffer the little girl out of her sight a moment; she was admonished that the weather was growing too warm for one so young and delicate to walk any distance; so that L'étoile was, for the present, forbidden ground. She was therefore denied the only lively pleasure remaining to her, that of freely enjoying air, exercise, and the performance of her best friend's wishes.

CHAP. XI.

Late in the second week of their absence, just as she had put Cecile to bed, and was beginning to lull her to sleep with a fairy tale, she heard her travellers arrive, and go through the usual noise and bustle of transferring themselves and their baggage from their heavy vehicle.

Cecile would not let her sister stir, till she heard whether the giant conquered the fairy, or the fairy the giant; and Aigline, conscious that her mother would not have her darling crossed, even by by the act which rendered respect to herself, was standing by the little tyrant's pillow, hurrying over the story, when

Madame de Roche Blanc herself appeared. Her black dress announced the death of the Baron's aunt. She hastily touched Aigline's cheek as the latter started forward to welcome her; then, advancing to the bed, snatched up her idol, devouring her with caresses. For some time, Aigline's respectful enquiries about her mother's and sister's health, were unnoticed: at length, Madame de Roche Blanc having challenged Cecile to tell her truly whether Aigline had been kind to her, and receiving a satisfactory reply, found leisure to sigh, and say, "Go down stairs; you will find Lolótte with the Baron. When I see you again, I shall expect you to tell me truly, what *you* think of your sister."

This strange adjuration, spoken in a peculiarly desponding tone, convinced Aigline that her poor sister was only brought home to die; and that she was going to see a young creature whose pitiable appearance would wring its last

hope out of her heart — that of one day possessing in Lolótte a friend, to recompense her for the loss of those at L'étoile.

With such an impression Aigline entered the treillage room, as it was called, where the family generally sat in summer; and which, opening out into the garden under a semi-circular colonade of light wood-work, covered entirely with white roses, looked down the valley into the green bosom of the mountains. There, in the clear light of a chrystal May-evening, stood Lolótte.

Never, under so lovely a canopy, stood any thing more lovely. Instead of the pale, attenuated girl, which Aigline expected to have seen, she beheld health, beauty, and youth, in their first vernal freshness. What the colour or shape of her sister's eyes were, Aigline could not have told: she was only sensible that they were brighter and more beautiful than any thing she had ever beheld;

that a profusion of glittering hair, like the hair of angels, was curling round a neck almost sparkling from its alabaster whiteness; that Lolótte's complexion made her fancy such cheeks must have the odour, as well as the hue of roses; that her shape was that of the youthful Venus; and that an expression at once bashful and tender, was diffused over her whole countenance.

Exclaiming, "Is this my sister!" Aigline ran and threw her arms about Lolótte's neck, in a perfect transport of admiration.

The Baron was beginning to say something; but what, Aigline heard not. She was overpowered with unexpected joy; and, as she hung smiling and sobbing upon this recovered sister, his voluble voice was unheeded. One of his servants called him out of the room, and Aigline was then left alone with Lolótte: her tender endearments may be imagined. Lolótte suffered herself to

be caressed, and admired, with timid patience; but no tears or tremblings, like those of the too sensitive Aigline, evidenced sympathy of nature. She even looked strangely astonished, when the latter apprehensively grieved for the death of her protectress.

All at once, without noticing any one of these kindnesses, she began to struggle like a wearied child, whispering, "Let me go — do let me go."

Aigline suffered her to escape from her hand; and remaining under the colonade, while the other darted with the speed of a halcyon into the garden, — stood there, for some minutes, watching her movements.

No sooner did Lolótte find herself alone, than her awkward embarrassment seemed to change into the wildest spirits: for she went bounding along under the high trees, snatching at the shrubs and flowers as she passed, with a childish disregard of the havoc she was making;

which surprised Aigline nearly as much as her giddy animation had done.

While Lolótte thus caught at the boughs and blossoms above her head, it was impossible for her sister not to be struck with the exquisite turn of her figure, already of that luxuriant fullness which forms perfection of shape. Her beautiful arms, whiter than statuary marble, were moulded beyond the statuary's art; and the foot, which her volant movements frequently displayed, was as delicate as exquisite in its formation.

Attracted afresh by her astonishing beauty, and convinced now, that her disinclination to talk must have arisen from shyness, not unsocial humour, Aigline thought the best way to win her sister out of herself, would be to awaken her grateful sensibility; she therefore, gently drew to her side, and began asking some questions respecting her recovered health; "about which she had made herself unhappy," she said, "happily without cause."

While Aigline affectionately and anxiously eyed her, blush after blush rose and disappeared, like so many heavenly visions, upon the youthful cheeks of Lolótte. She looked down without speaking. At length, suddenly bursting into speech, she began a quick, wild, disjointed string of sentences, so entirely foreign to the subject of Aigline's questions, that she seemed like a person talking in their sleep.

Unable to comprehend what she meant, and pained by what she supposed the excessive confusion of her sister, Aigline gently proposed their returning into the house to wait for their mother. But when she would have turned for that purpose, Lolótte forcibly withheld her, denying that Madame de Roche Blanc was her mother; and whispering "that she liked Aigline the best, because she was pretty, and the other lady frightful."

Aigline was at no loss to comprehend

how beauty and ugliness might be synonymous, in a very artless young person's mind, with kind and cross looks; but that Lolótte should refuse to acknowledge her relationship to their mother, astonished and perplexed her. She could only solve the difficulty by concluding, that the innocent girl had been taught to think her dead relation was her parent. The next moment, Lolótte, throwing herself on the grass, began singing and cropping the choicest flowers, as busily again, as if nothing had agitated her.

Aigline's faculties were now quite bewildered; and, lost in a vague suspicion of the dismal truth, she was standing fixedly and fearfully regarding her unconscious sister, when a voice behind, awakened her from her miserable trance. She started; and saw her mother by her side!

"Aigline!" said Madame de Roche Blanc, with something of a supplicatory tone, "what do *you* think of her?"

The tone in which this was said, and the look which accompanied it; nay, the very words themselves, said in the presence of the person spoken of, at once flashed the truth upon Aigline. In a faint voice, she besought her mother to tell her what she expected her to think?

"What! I see you do," returned Madame de Roche Blanc, more than its usual cloud settling on her brow—"that she is imbecile, past hope. Oh, my God! and so beautiful!"

These words were a death-knell to a sister's heart. Aigline's eyes closed with a low shudder; while, feeling herself on the point of falling, she caught at one of the trees for support.

One strong emotion, however, combated another: she was too fearful of displeasing her mother by this weakness, not to struggle against it; and she, therefore, recovered herself in time to escape rebuke. Madame de Roche Blanc then took her arm; and looking round from

time to time, to see that Lolótte was still safely seated among the flowers, plucking and arranging them at will, she said, with a choaking sigh, "There sits the dismal secret of my constant anxiety, to fix you in your duty, Aigline! An inward complaint, which I have kept principally to myself, has long been preying on my life; I cannot live long" — (the Baroness fancied she thought so). "What a comfort it would be to me, in my last moments, if I might be sure that yon poor idiot, and my little angel within doors, would have a second mother in their elder sister. If you were to continue living with the Baron, I do not think he would marry again — at least, if he did, your kindness to my poor children ——"

Aigline interrupted her. "Dear mother," she asked, dissolving into tears at this mention of her death, "is not my life in your hands, to do with as you please?"

Embarrassed by her victim's unresistingness, Madame de Roche Blanc took refuge in her usual frigidity of manner; and replied, with some hesitation, "If I did not know by experience that they who live single are far the happiest, I should not wish you to do so; and, indeed, I will not ask it, if you are bent upon the folly of marrying, or have taken a fancy, (much as I should be astonished at such a thing,) to any of the persons you have seen."

"I am little likely to be tempted into such folly at Roche Blanc," Aigline said, blushing at the trifling insincerity of her reply.

"Nay, Aigline," resumed her mother with a sarcastic tone, "has not that fine pedant, Monsieur Fontevraud — but I forget, he is a Catholic — *that* would be out of the question."

"Quite out of the question any way," Aigline said, decisively.

"But then there is the self-willed

young gentleman of L'étoile," observed Madame de Roche Blanc more pointedly; "not that *he* thinks of you in the least as any thing beyond a play-fellow — but you, perhaps ——"

"I!" exclaimed Aigline, smiling; "he used to be merely my play-fellow; but I hope I may now think of him as my friend, without any impropriety or folly."

"Certainly, with proper restrictions," cried her mother, seizing the opportunity which Aigline's ignorance of her own sensibilities, afforded her of enforcing the point she had at heart. "I am satisfied — I see you know your duty — and know what is due to female dignity. From this moment I renounce all my fears; which I confess some busy bodies put into my head, about your heedless intimacy at L'étoile. It was very well when you were a child, and Clarence Willoughby little better; but now that he has been out in the world, and fancies

himself a hero and a great man, the next thing he will do will be to fancy you in love with him, if you go on walking and talking with him when he returns, as you were used to do. And Heaven forbid, that any daughter of mine should give occasion for such an immodest supposition!"

Aigline, blushing crimson at the last offensive expression, protested, with all imaginable sincerity, her belief, "that such ideas were as foreign to Clarence's generous mind as to her own. For that, if she were to judge his feelings by her's, and hitherto they had been similar, she could safely aver that he considered her exactly as he had done in his boyish years — as a sister, to whom he would willingly give protection and share kindness."

"That question, then, is set at rest for ever," said her mother, willing to conclude the subject on the point which had pledged Aigline to act hereafter in

conformity with her present declaration; "and now, Aigline, I must further tell you that Lolótte is left a very large fortune, which ties us down to keep her under the same roof with ourselves — if we would reap any advantage from it. Eventually, all this must benefit you, in common with the rest of our children: for the Baron, unlike most step-fathers, generously—" here the Baroness stopped, coughed, hesitated, and, unable to finish the misrepresenting sentence, suddenly returned to the former one — "so, as I said, it behoves you to try to manage her, and keep her out of harm's way; for, if any artful man, enticed by her beauty and fortune, should succeed in carrying her off, we should all be undone. My increasing ill-health, the care required by that little angel Cecile, my frequent trouble about the boys, and the Baron's variety of vexatious whims, are, altogether, more than I can support singly. You must, therefore, promise to

take Lolótte entirely off my hands, by studying her ways, coaxing her into liking you, and teaching her to mind what you say: in short, as you hope for your mother's love and blessing."

"Ah, Madam!" exclaimed Aigline, bursting into tears, "what would I not do for your love and blessing?"

Madame de Roche Blanc was momentarily affected; but restraining herself, and stifling her better feelings, she said, austerely, "Come, come, Aigline! you must not give way to this foolish habit of crying upon every trifling occasion. Has any body put it into your head that it is pretty and sentimental? for it is only of late that you have taken up this annoying practice. I have cause enough for tears every day, God knows, yet when do you see me indulge myself so senselessly?"

There was no appeal from such a remark as this; and Aigline was obliged to bind herself to the strictest care of

Lolótte, of whom she was henceforth to be the watchful guardian, day and night. Alas! Aigline knew not the extent of what she was promising; yet a strange dread crept through her veins when she made the promise. With what a different sensation did she now behold the celestial beauty of her sister! She gazed to see if that beauty had not dazzled her into a wrong notion of Lolótte's expression of countenance; but imbecility of mind was certainly not evident there. Blushing bashfulness was its striking characteristic: and it was only when Lolótte was seized with fits of causeless laughter, or fits of unreal fear, that her beautiful face became frightfully expressive of idiocy.

Aigline now recollected the imperfect disclosure she had once overheard between her parents; and she shuddered at the Baron's merciless idea of trying terror as an experiment upon a feeble intellect. How much more did her heart

revolt against him, when, on rejoining him in the house, she saw the extravagant spirits into which he was thrown by the expected disposal of a large income, only nominally Lolótte's.

The Baron talked of the house in Languedoc, as if it had already been in his possession half a century: dismantled it in idea; rebuilt it; uprooted its old gardens, and laid out new ones, with the transport of a young poet casting the different characters of his play. He seemed wholly to forget, that all this wealth was bestowed by the liberal, though weak relation, whom the grave had just closed upon; and that his uncontrolled authority over it, was the consequence of the direst calamity that can befall a parent in the person of their child.

Pale, and aghast, with so many heart-rending reflections, Aigline made only feeble attempts to engage her sister's attention: her own sensibility was, as yet,

not sufficiently exercised, to have the strength requisite for recovering immediately from the severe shock it had sustained: she could only rally herself by slow degrees and repeated efforts. — Lolótte by degrees, also, became more familiar with her sister; admired the silken ringlets of her hair, the velvet touch of her hand; and looked at herself so seriously, in the dark mirror of her sister's eyes, as flooded those eyes with tears of bitterest compassion.

During this first evening, an old servant, who had been Lolótte's attendant in Languedoc, was the only person admitted to wait upon the family at supper. Madame de Roche Blanc seemed anxious to delay the mortifying discovery to her household as long as possible, of her daughter's humiliating condition. Aigline anxiously observed Thomasine's countenance as she came in and out of the apartment with the fruits and creams; and its respectful sorrowfulness pleased

her. She was comforted to find that this amiable-looking person was to sleep always in the next apartment to her and Lolótte; for the purpose of quieting her young charge, in case she were seized with one of her fits of causeless panic in the night.

Night came, and night passed: Aigline, indeed, slept not; but the beauteous creature by her side, happily lay steeped in the profoundest sleep. When morning broke, Aigline raised herself on her pillow, and contemplated Lolótte with an anguish of mind she had never known till now. How beautiful was that softly breathing form, and those peaceful features! The few glittering ringlets which had escaped from her night-fillet, and lay upon her cheek, only made the roses of that cheek glow more vividly through their golden net-work. The action of her rounded arms, crossed over her breast as if she had sunk to sleep in the act of her simple prayer; nay, the lingering

smile of her lips, gave something angelic to her appearance. Aigline felt the contrast between this appearance and the woeful reality, pierce her inmost soul: yet, could it be possible, she thought, that such external perfection was coupled with cureless imbecility? might not injudicious treatment, or mere neglect, have increased the evil; or at least left her intellect stationary? Might not care and kindness operate to good purpose; and something like rational notions of good and evil, of the fit and unfit, be at length traced on that pure blank of thought?

Aigline asked herself these questions with kindling and generous hope; resolving, that, if care and tenderness might throw one gleam of light upon the dim twilight of that mind, her's, with all its powers, should be devoted unsparingly to the task.

As Aigline continued gazing upon the sleeping and fair creature beneath her

eye, she could not help conjecturing whether any connected visions visited her slumbers, or whether a dreamless, death-like insensibility held her spirit, as well as her senses, wholly suspended. She wondered whether the capacities of the heart were limited in proportion to those of the intellect; and whether such sad limitations were the consequence of bodily structure, or of original difference in the spiritual essence.

Awful, impenetrable, was the mystery! and retreating from the distressing enquiry with sighing submission to the Almighty will, Aigline wrung her hands in an agony of pity and despondency: some heavy tears dropt from her eyes at that moment, upon the face of Lolótte. The latter started, and waked; and, seeing an unremembered face all pale with grief and watching, she shrieked aloud; falling into one of those paroxysms of nervous terror, which often seized her without apparent cause. At the sound

of her voice, the respectable Thomasine came running in from the next apartment; and her judicious management gradually brought Lolótte to herself. This good woman instructed Aigline what to do and say, to obtain Lolótte's confidence; while she coaxed and caressed the other into regarding with steadiness the inviting face of her sister, which, though covered with tears of mingled alarm and sorrow, was so full of love and sweetness, that it was impossible really to look on it, without being touched or soothed by its expression.

Beautiful, indeed, are the eyes that look on us with love! Lolótte felt this in her heart, though incapable of comprehending why she was all at once impelled to throw her arms round a stranger's neck, and kiss those tenderly-beaming eyes. Aigline pressed her softly against her heart: every rapid movement, or energetic expression, she now saw must be avoided. While she assisted

Thomasine to dress and entertain this unconscious unfortunate, and heard her rising into the highest spirits, gay and gladsome about nothing, she felt it more heart-breaking to behold her thus, than to see her as she had so lately done, lying in dreamless sleep upon her pillow. From this day Aigline's period of domestic slavery might be said determinately to commence. Her attendance upon Cecile had often been given mechanically, while her thoughts were agreeably absorbed in other things. Considering that attendance partly unnecessary, she had never scrupled to accept any offered moment of release from it; but, with Lolotte, her own heart conspired against her. This unfortunate sister grew upon her affections, not merely as an object of pity, but as an innocent being that loved with all her bounded capacity.

Could Aigline have closed her eyes to the ripened charms of Lolotte's person, or forgotten that she was in her fifteenth

year, she might easily have imagined that she was watching over a child; self-willed and capricious, it is true, yet sweet and loving, and soon checked in folly. There was nothing provoking, nothing revolting in the poor girl's misfortune; and nature had provided her otherwise defenceless beauty with so powerful a protection in instinctive modesty, that none but the vilest natures would have dared to insult its unconsciousness by one misbecoming look or action. That angelic protector waved no flaming sword to defend his paradise: the presence of such a guardian was alone sufficient. And they who looked upon Lolotte's trembling, blushing appearance, might as easily have intruded forbidden things into the sanctuary, as have urged forward their own levity to profane her purity.

Sometimes Aigline fancied that a glimmering of improvement was visible in her questions or remarks; and, if the trusty Thomasine appeared struck with the same

idea, then Aigline's transport was unbounded. This new and sacred interest diverted her thoughts from the only channel they had hitherto joyed to flow in, whether under sunshine or under shadow, the recollection of Mr. Willoughby and his son: that remembrance had, till now, been the chief occupation of her solitary musings, and the subject of her nightly dreams. To imagine where they were, and what they were about; to live over past scenes with them, and to fancy new, where they would be the principal actors, formed her sweetest enjoyment. But Lolótte was come to render this no longer a blameless indulgence: Aigline felt that she was henceforth called upon for all the energies of her mind; therefore, whatever might abstract her from such exertion, was to be resisted.

At her home Mr. Willoughby was as rarely spoken of as if he had never existed: neither the Baron nor Baroness now required his serviceable aid; there-

fore they did not miss him. Aigline, however, could not forget either Mr. Willoughby or Clarence, even had she wished it; for every inhabitant of the valley bewailed their absence. To L'étoile she still went, faithful to her promise, and not unwilling to have an excuse for haunting the place where she had often been so happy. The nightingales sang more sweetly and in greater numbers in those woods than they did at Roche Blanc; the wild flowers were more abundant, the trees more umbrageous, the solitude more profound.

Madame de Roche Blanc, too, well pleased to have Lolótte removed from her sight and the mockery of Cecile, yet in a place secure from intrusion, willingly yielded to her fancy for L'étoile, trusting her to Aigline and those quiet shades, without scruple.

Solicitous to improve, while she amused her, this tender sister gradually tamed Lolótte's wildness, into habits less

obviously different from the rest of her fellow-beings. She got her to take delight in imitating with shells and beads the flowers she gathered in the garden: she taught her to find pleasure in planting and nursing real flowers, in place of destroying them: she told her affecting or amusing stories, sufficiently artless in their structure and language, even for a child to understand, yet so happily conceived as to contain the seeds of some of our best principles, and most kindly feelings.

Lolótte, by degrees, learned to weep at these stories, and to love their repetition; carrying their instructions often into action, by tenderness to the inferior creatures around her. As she had from the first, shown an extraordinary degree of interest in the details of another world, though her imperfect ideas wandered vaguely through its "palpable obscure," Aigline urged them to proceed — yet in a plainer track, until she

led her to some stationary notions of an all-seeing, rewarding Providence.

In the natural grottoes round L'étoile, or under the bowers formed by its beautiful trees, thus instructing and instructed, they would sit whole days together: the one knowing no world beyond those woods and those grottoes; the other, contented to forego every other, for the sake of ministering to the innocent Being, so awfully and unconsciously afflicted.

In this way, days and weeks stole on in comparative peace; for Aigline's spirits were composed, by constant performance of an interesting duty: and sometimes the gratifying consciousness of having some beneficial result of her life, to show her honored Mr. Willoughby when he should return, would glide through her mind. Her ingenious kindness had already done so much for Lolótte, that she fondly fancied there would be still more effected; and glowing with the

hope of improving her into something like equality with a rational child, she no longer lamented the absence of her early friends: rather congratulating herself that they would not see her sister, until they saw the poor thing all that her instructress hoped.

As rashly given to hope as to despair, Aigline yielded to this belief with sanguine confidence; recovering all the spring of character which had, in that respect, fully matched the felicitous elasticity of Clarence Willoughby's. Yet were clouds gathering over her family, occasioned by the folly and obstinacy of her step-father.

The large property which bad been unwisely bequeathed to Lolótte by her deceased friend, was now disputed by the heir-at-law, the son to an elder brother of the Baron. This gentleman had at first offered to compromise the business; both to avoid the scandal and expense of bringing such an action into

the courts, and in consideration of the testatrix's evident wish to provide nobly for the former object of her doating compassion.

This proposition, though made most handsomely, and repeated at different intervals, the Baron had peremptorily refused, declaring he would have all for his child, or nothing: persisting, in defiance of his wife's acrid, though just remonstrances, in the belief that law would decide in his favour; and that knowing Lolótte's imbecility when she bequeathed this property, his aunt's will would be considered valid.

In vain Madame de Roche Blanc prophesied that his full-blown hopes would burst under him: in vain she threatened himself and them with utter ruin, in consequence of a long-drawn suit at law: in vain she represented the shame of having their whole family stigmatized with imbecility or insanity, from the misfortune of one. The Baron was deaf

as the winds, ungovernable as the winds. His levity increased with his lady's vexation; and by way of setting the seal to his folly, and irritating her to the utmost, he flew to Languedoc, and began immediately to pull down one wing of the old house, by way of showing that he was quite sure the estate could not be withdrawn from his power, as natural trustee to his child.

The legacy bequeathed to himself, which could not be questioned, was too likely to follow all that he had hitherto spent in vexatious wastefulness. He now clad his domestics in expensive liveries, rather suited for the followers of a courtier, than for the household drudges of a mere Bearnese gentleman; he bought gaudy caparisons for a set of rare mules, which he purchased out of Spain to draw some ridiculous carriage of his own invention; he withdrew his son from Paris, and placed him under more costly care at Tholouse, for the

sake of enabling him to attend his father to the courts there, during his process—of course, in the hope of the little François profiting by his brilliant display of wit and sagacity. In short, the Baron's fooleries were without end; and Madame de Roche Blanc, whose health was really sinking, who foresaw how the law-suit would terminate, and the money it would dissipate, was beginning to feel, in her extravagant distress for one favourite child, the just punishment of disregarding the others. Trembling lest the Baron should indeed squander every atom of the provision she had hoped to secure for her youngest girl, she began to wish sincerely for the return of Mr. Willoughby, whose interference now, or benevolence hereafter, she thought herself sure of commanding.

But Mr. Willoughby had now been gone six long months from Roche Blanc; and in that time, the inhabitants of the chateau had heard of him only twice.

That blessed medium of intercourse between separated friends, that medium of annoyance from idlers — the *Post* — was at this period unknown; and even Clarence Willoughby, residing under the roof of one of the princes, had no other than chance modes of sending news to his distant connexions. The facilities afforded him in the time of war, when couriers were officially dispatched, or privately sent to their families by the princes, had now ceased; and Clarence thought himself fortunate, when a messenger to the king of Navarre at Pau or Nerac, enabled him to let Aigline know, through the medium of a letter to the Baron, that his father had landed safely in England; and that he himself was well.

This letter unluckily arrived at Roche Blanc one day, just as the Baron was mounting his gaily caparisoned steed, to begin a journey into Languedoc: he glanced his eye over it, thrust it into his

pocket, and galloped carelessly off, singing the fag-end of the old war-song of Roland, which he chose to call a *chanson* of his own. It was not for three weeks after this, that on the Baron's temporary return, some allusion being made to Mr. Willoughby's protracted absence, the former recollected that he might still perhaps have Clarence's forgotten letter in his pocket. He then produced it, without shame or apology, to those so affectionately mentioned in it; laughing at the folly of women, who were always sure to attach importance to such trifles as letters and locks of hair. Then enchanted with his own vivacity, and the happy vein of raillery, which he believed he had opened, he proceeded in such a strain of puerile jest and misbecoming levity, to rally Aigline upon her evident passion for the *dumb widower* of L'étoile, that Madame de Roche Blanc was obliged to remind him, with more than her usual authoritative displeasure, that

he was speaking before two other persons, to whom, such light conversation might do harm; before one, at least, whose report might injure them all in the opinion of their few neighbours.

Upon the innocent and unattending Lolótte, it could have no effect; but Cecile was quick, curious, and what is called witty; and her mother knew would be likely enough to divert herself hereafter, by repeating precisely before the persons from whom this senseless jesting ought to be concealed, the whole essence of her father's fancied wit. Aigline utterly disregarded it: and rendered happy by seeing the hand-writing of Clarence, and hearing that Mr. Willoughby was safely over the sea, she indulged, for the first time since their departure, a flow of such enchanting spirits as were once stationary with her: but which now came, "like angel's visits! few and far between."

So thoroughly ignorant as Aigline was

of law and property, it was not wonderful that she should be inclined to believe her step-father's florid assertion, that the suit he was beginning to sustain, must end in Lolótte's favor. She wished it for all their sakes; and she hoped always, that Lolótte would at last become able to use her noble legacy with credit to herself. Thus, Aigline's heart continued comparatively light, in spite of her mother's depressing habit of insisting upon all the evils which existed, or threatened them. That sensitive heart actually bounded again, when, on going to L'étoile, she was met by Godefroi, who told her that he came an *avant courier* of the dear young gentleman, the Chevalier Clarence.

Breathless with joy and eagerness, and the next moment overcome with the tender recollections of Mr. Willoughby, which Clarence's visit occasioned, Aigline enquired the particulars. She then learned, that Godefroi had received

a letter from Clarence, who was then at Nerac with the princes, whence he meant to come to L'étoile; and that he had appointed Godefroi to go over to his house with certain orders to the steward. Aigline heard also, with regret, that Clarence purposed bringing with him three or four of his Paris friends: but as Godefroi assured her, that his letter said they would leave him in a week to the quiet possession of his own fields, she trusted that his frequent society afterwards, would make up to her for that privation of it, to which she was sure her mother would condemn her, during the visit of Clarence's company. To the propriety of this sentence, Aigline's delicate mind itself consented. Her unfortunate sister, she felt, was much too lovely, to be shown for a moment to a set of giddy gallants, whose admiration might either terrify or fascinate her.

To Clarence himself she knew Lolótte's

misfortune would render the blank of her mind, a thing like the snow on consecrated ground — not to be profaned by the breathings, either of feigned or real passion. To his eyes, therefore, she would have exposed that treasure of beauty, without fear; to his generous compasion she would have trusted her lamentable infirmity with perfect confidence. But what his associates might prove, she knew not; and she therefore hastened home, after a short but kindly conversation with Godefroi, to apprize her mother that Clarence was expected at L'étoile, accompanied, as she had heard, and to agree with her on the best mode of keeping Lolótte out of sight.

Leaving Madame de Roche Blanc to reflect whether she ought to be pleased or sorry at the return of Clarence Willoughby, and Aigline to anticipate, with alternate throbs of hope and chills of doubt, another sight of her earliest, dearest

companion ; it may be well to look to the conduct and situation of that companion himself, during the time which had elapsed since his last departure from Bearn.

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